



VFW National Membership Program
2025-2026

Carol Whitmore
Commander-in-Chief
“For Veterans, By Veterans”

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Commander's Introduction:

Carol Whitmore was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on August 13th, 2025, at the 126th VFW National Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

Carol served in the U.S. Army from 1977 to 2013, earning her VFW eligibility by serving in Iraq. In recognition of her service, she received the Legion of Merit Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal (six), Army Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, among many others.

She joined the VFW in 2012 at Post 9127 in Des Moines, Iowa, where she maintains her Gold Legacy Life membership. In 2022, she was elected as designee for National VFW Commander-in-Chief for the year 2025, becoming the first woman and first Iowan to hold the position.

Commander's Statement:

Commanders, this will be the longest year, with the shortest days. It will test you in more ways than you can imagine. If it were easy, everyone would do it. Membership is tremendously important in our organization, but it is not the only thing. When you go through your year, change what you can, do the right things and leave the rest. Prioritize and organize.

I have three main focuses: Advocacy, service officers and our POW/MIA mission. They all tie together, and it is what the VFW was founded on. They impact fellow veterans and their families lives. Be the change for a fellow veteran. Honor those who came before us. If we promote these three things, I know we will evoke more interest, which will bring more members.

101% membership is our goal. The OIF/OEF community is ready to be involved. Let them know what we do, how we can change lives, and how they can feel a part of the military community again. Tell our story, tell your story!!!

Have no regrets, don't take anything personally, never assume anything....be the transformation to the future! Honor the dead, by helping the living!

FOR VETERANS BY VETERANS**Membership Mission:**

To build a strong organization through recruiting new members while retaining our current membership, building a solid foundation for the future. To assist in mentoring our leadership and members, coordinate programs to support our Posts, Districts, and Departments in their membership efforts, and to provide training for all levels of VFW membership.

All-American Program:

The All-American program exists to recognize exceptional leadership and teamwork, authentic accomplishment in membership growth, and participation in VFW core programs.

All-American Post Criteria

All Posts who have met the following criteria as of June 30th, 2026 will be named as All-American Posts:

- At least 101% in membership, based on adjusted prior year totals.
- Must have a Post election report submitted and be in good standing.
- Must meet the following Program Participation Criteria by January 31, 2026:
 - o Voice of Democracy – minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Posts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
 - o Patriot's Pen – minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Posts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
- Must donate to Veterans & Military Support Programs Services, minimum of \$125.
- Must participate in the VFW Day of Service event held during the month of May and registered at todaysvfw.org/day-of-service/ no later than May 15th. Participation may count as community service for All-American quarterly requirements. The event must meet certain criteria aimed at making a meaningful difference in the community. The criteria and more information can be found here: <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service-faq/>
- A Post must submit a community service report quarterly to their department for submission to the All-American Dashboard. The quarters are July-Sept, Oct-Dec, Jan-March, and April-June.
- Must purchase a minimum of 500 Buddy Poppies.

All-American Post Award

All Posts that meet the listed criteria will receive: An All-American Post Streamer, a Post Home Citation, and will be recognized in the VFW Magazine.

In addition, the top 15 Posts in each membership division will receive:

- All-American Post Commander's Citation
- All-American Post Commander's Cap
- All-American Post Commander's Badge
- All-American Post Commander's lapel pin

These awards for the top 15 Posts will be presented on stage at the 127th National Convention.

The Top five Post Commanders in each division will also be reimbursed for up to \$1,000 of travel/lodging expenses for the 127th VFW National Convention. The top two Post Commanders in each division will be named as Captain and Co-Captain of the All-American Team, and their caps will bear a special designation.

All-American District Criteria

All Districts that have met the following criteria as of June 30th, 2026 will be named as All-American Districts:

- At least 101% in membership, based on adjusted prior year totals.
- District Election report must be submitted to National Headquarters
- Must meet the following Program Participation Criteria by January 31, 2026:
 - o Voice of Democracy – minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas Districts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
 - o Patriot's Pen – minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas Districts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)

All-American District Awards

All Districts that meet the listed criteria will receive an All-American District Streamer, an All-American District Commander's Citation, and recognition in the VFW Magazine.

In addition, the top 10 Districts in each membership division will receive:

- All-American District Commander's Cap
- All-American District Commander's Badge
- All-American District Commander's lapel pin

These awards for the top 10 District Commanders will be presented on stage at the 127th National Convention.

The top two District Commanders in each division will also be reimbursed for up to \$1,000 of travel/lodging expenses for the 127th VFW National Convention. The Top Two District Commanders in each division will be named as Captain and Co-Captain of the All-American Team, and their caps will bear a special designation.

All-American Department Criteria

All Departments that have met the following criteria as of June 30th, 2026 will be named as All-American Departments:

- At least 101% in membership, based on adjusted prior year totals.

- Department must submit Department legislative chairman reports monthly through the Program dashboard tool.
- Must meet the following Program Participation Criteria by January 31, 2026:
 - o Voice of Democracy – an entry advanced to National judging
 - o Patriot’s Pen – an entry advanced to National judging
- Veterans & Military Support Programs – must complete State/Department fundraiser with proceeds donated to Veterans & Military Support via the Programs Dashboard. Donations will benefit the National Veterans Service fund.

All-American Department Awards

All Departments that meet the listed criteria will receive the following:

- All-American Department streamer
- All-American Department Commander’s Citation
- All-American Department Commander’s Cap
- All-American Department Commander’s Badge
- All-American Department Commander’s lapel pin
- Reimbursement for up to \$1,000 of travel/lodging expenses for the 127th National Convention.

These awards will be presented on stage at the 127th National Convention.

All-American Notes

- Any member of a Post that is named as an All-American Post may purchase a All-American Post Member cap from the VFW Store after the 127th National Convention. Post, District, and Department Quartermasters and Adjutants may purchase an All-American Post Member cap bearing their title. Quartermasters may also purchase an All-American Quartermaster pin from the VFW Store.
- Donations made to replace Program Participation by eligible overseas Posts, Districts, or Departments as well as fundraising donations must be made through the Programs Dashboard, not through any other means.

Triple Crown:

The Triple Crown is one of the most prestigious membership awards that an individual can achieve. It requires being named as an All-American Commander at Post, District, and Department level. Leaders who attain this level of excellence will be recognized at the 127th National Convention with a special Triple Crown pin.

Membership Programs and Awards

Individual Recruiting Awards:

5/10/15 members recruited: corresponding recruiter pin

25 members recruited: Commander-in-Chief's Coin

50 members recruited: Recruiter's Medical Bag

75 members recruited: Commander-in-Chief's Medallion Set

100 members recruited: Century Cap and Citation. Recruiters may opt to receive a \$50 credit to the VFW Store in lieu of a Century Cap.

Individual Recruiting Awards will be sent out regularly during the membership year to the Post, to be given out at a Post meeting to recognize those members who have helped achieve the membership mission.

Early Bird Award:

The top two Posts in each division as of January 1, 2026 will each be awarded a \$1,000 gift certificate to the VFW Store.

Legacy Life Membership Acquisition:

Each Post that achieves the cumulative benchmarks of 25, 50 and 75 Legacy Life Members will be awarded a Legacy Society Post Proclamation. Proclamations will be sent out to the Post along with recruiting awards throughout the year.

For each Post that achieves the distinctive benchmark of 100, 250, or 500 Legacy Life members by June 30th, 2026, their commander or Post representative will be reimbursed up to \$1,000 for travel / lodging for the National Convention, reserved seating at the 127th VFW National Convention joint opening session and a Legacy Society Post Proclamation presented at the National Convention.

101% Membership Streamer:

All Posts, Districts, and Departments that reach the goal of 101% membership based on adjusted prior year totals by June 30, 2026 or before will receive a distinctive streamer.

Divisional Recruiting Challenge:

The top two Posts in each membership division based on new and reinstated members according to the table below will receive a \$1,000 membership grant deposited into the Post's account.

Division	Size	New Member Quota
1	951+	At least 125 new/reinstated members
2	750-950	At least 120 new/reinstated members
3	356-749	At least 100 new/reinstated members
4	246-355	At least 75 new/reinstated members
5	185-245	At least 60 new/reinstated members
6	143-184	At least 50 new/reinstated members
7	112-142	At least 40 new/reinstated members
8	88-111	At least 30 new/reinstated members
9	68-87	At least 20 new/reinstated members
10	51-67	At least 15 new/reinstated members
11	Under 50	At least 10 new/reinstated members

Department Above & Beyond Award:

Each Department that exceeds the membership goal and reaches 102% membership on June 30, 2026 will receive a \$2,000 award deposited into the Department account. If the Department reaches 103% membership, the award will increase to \$4,000. If the Department reaches 104% or above in membership, the award will increase to \$7,500.

Top Department Recruiter:

The top recruiter in every Department as of June 30th, 2026 will receive a Commander's Medical Bag. A minimum of 25 new/reinstated members is required to win this award.

Elite Recruiter:

Any VFW member who signs up 250 or more new and/or reinstated members as of June 30th, 2026 will also be reimbursed for up to \$1,000 of travel/lodging expenses for the 127th VFW National Convention as well as a distinctive cap, citation, and name badge. In the event that an Elite Recruiter is already being reimbursed for travel/lodging from another award, a \$1,000 stipend will be issued at the 127th National Convention.

Recruiter of the Year:

The Elite Recruiter who signs up the greatest number of new and/or reinstated members greater than 250 as of June 30th, 2026, will receive an additional \$1,000 stipend, reserved seating at the 127th VFW National Convention joint opening session, a distinctive cap, citation, and name badge, and the Commander-in-Chief's Crystal Eagle trophy.

Life Member Recruiter Award:

Any VFW member who recruits at least 50 new and/or reinstated Life members by June 30th, 2026 or before will receive a special citation from the Commander-in-Chief and a Recruiter Satchel with the Commander-in-Chief's logo.

New Post Development Department Grant:

For each new Post chartered the Department Quartermaster will receive a \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post. Department Commanders and Quartermasters may apply for this grant directly through the National Membership Department.

Commander-in-Chief's Challenge:

To emphasize the importance of Life Membership as the backbone of our membership strength, the Commander-in-Chief is issuing the following challenge to all VFW Posts. Each quarter (July-September, October-December, January-March, April-June), Posts will accumulate points as follows:

New Annual Member: 1 point

Annual or Lapsed Member converts to Life Member: 5 points

New Life Member: 10 points

Each quarter, the Post that leads their membership division in points will receive a special award designated by the Commander-in-Chief. In addition, at the end of the year every Post who has led their division in the challenges will be recognized at the 127th National Convention for their achievements.

Post Division Breakdown:

Division	Minimum Membership	Maximum Membership
1	951+	
2	750	950
3	356	749
4	246	355
5	185	245
6	143	184
7	112	142
8	88	111
9	68	87
10	51	67
11	10	50

District Division Breakdown:

Division	Minimum Membership	Maximum Membership
1	5000+	
2	3,282	4,999
3	2,172	3,281
4	1,447	2,171
5	906	1,446
6	10	905

MEMBERSHIP NOTES AND RESOURCES:

- Awards given to a Post may be transferred to any member of that Post.
- No more than one stipend will be awarded to an individual for a given event.
- Posts, Districts, and Departments must reach a minimum of 101% membership to qualify for any award. This does not apply to the Early Bird Award.
- NOTE: Cash stipends paid by the VFW will be reported to the Internal Revenue Service on Form 1099 if the total of payments made to you during any calendar year equals \$600.00 or more. The reimbursement you receive from the VFW will be deemed by the IRS to be taxable income. Since the circumstances of each individual are different, it is recommended that you consult your tax advisor to determine the effect these payments may have on your personal tax situation. It is your responsibility to keep receipts and other records as you and your accountant and/or tax advisor deem necessary in order to document your expenditures.
- Employees and officers of the VFW National Headquarters are excluded from receiving stipends or awards in this program unless otherwise authorized by the Adjutant General and/or Quartermaster General.
- Awardees receiving reimbursement for travel and lodging costs for the 127th National Convention must provide receipts to the VFW Membership Department no later than August 31st, 2026 in order to receive reimbursement. Reimbursements shall be made by ACH deposit.

For information on how to use the Programs Dashboard, scan the QR code below:



Membership Contacts:

David Prohaska, Director – 816-968-1114, dprohaska@vfw.org

Matt Nute, Associate Director – 816-961-1122, mnute@vfw.org