



Legislative Program
2022 – 2023
Desiree DeVille

Be Informed • Be Engaged

We are, fundamentally, a nation of laws. The Legislative Program celebrates this foundational element by helping the Auxiliary to be advocates for legislation that promotes and elevates veterans' affairs. Our veterans, active service members, and their families, have sacrificed so much to protect America's legislative system – they should get the best it has to give back to them. We can help make that happen.

THE PROGRAM:

This is an important election year! Thousands of state-level senators and representatives will be voted in, or out, of office. The candidates are listening, and you can make your voices heard and tell our legislators that you care about veterans' issues, and you expect them to do the same. 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 on the National website at vfwauxiliary.org by selecting "What We Do" then clicking on "Legislative".

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 these 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 each year by the VFW. Be sure you check the VFW or Auxiliary websites 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 vfw.org/advocacy/grassroots-efforts.

Note: When the ***Action Corps Weekly*** sends you an "**Action Alert**," it's a call to action to tell our legislators by letter / e-mail / fax / phone call of the position we want them to take on a particular bill in Congress. As our elected representatives, we can and should hold them accountable if they do not share our views. The Action Corps website has a wonderfully simple tool that has short notes already drafted to send your legislators (based on your Zip Code) about pressing issues. You can edit it as you wish, and send it electronically in seconds, or you can print out the notes for mailing to share with those who do not have Internet connectivity.

In whatever way you choose, you can make your voice be heard and be counted, and thereby make a difference.

The focus of the Legislative Program is on engagement: become involved both individually AND collectively with your Auxiliary, your schools, and your community. We can fill an important role by contacting schools and providing a brief program on the legislative process and citizen advocacy, using the Auxiliary's "Guide to the Legislative Process" and the "Guide on Contacting Your Legislators" as well as other materials from the national website to help students learn more about veterans and their needs. In doing so, you can help students to find their voices, and use them to promote citizen advocacy effectively.

A Bill: Step by Step

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 Guidelines

Legislative activity is not the same as political activity. We support bills, not people or political parties. No Auxiliary space, which includes websites and social media accounts, should show favoritism towards a candidate, party or issues not endorsed by the VFW.

1. If you reach out to your state's Young Republicans National Federation, put equal effort into working with Young Democrats of America and vice versa.
2. Any voter registration activities should be politically neutral.
3. While it's true that veterans have opinions about hot button topics, our organization has no official opinion on things like environmental issues or gun rights. If you are engaged in that kind of activism, which you are free to do, you do so as a private citizen, not an auxiliary member.
4. Remind members that they are free to say whatever they want about whomever they want before and after meetings, but there is no space for partisanship when conducting official Auxiliary business.
5. Invite all candidates running for a local office to your Post for a town hall or debate.
6. If asked, decline to endorse any candidate.
7. Ask the moderator of your Auxiliary's social media accounts to remove any posts that suggest the organization favors one party over another.
8. This is important because today's military is made up of liberals, conservatives, moderates, republicans, and democrats. They all deserve legislation that makes their lives better.

Reaching Young Adult Voters

Examples of political and civic organizations at colleges or for young adult voters are the Young Republicans National Federation and Young Democrats of America, the ROTC and sororities and fraternities of nearby colleges. Reach out to their leadership team and introduce yourself. Don't just make contact, develop a partnership.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talk about the VFW's <i>Action Corps Weekly</i> and how to sign up, vfw.org/advocacy/grassroots-efforts/vfw-action-corps-weekly. 2. Invite them to be your guests at Post and Auxiliary events. 3. Ask for help using social media to contact elected leaders. 4. Offer to help them with their events such as voter registration drives. 5. Copy and send VFW "Action Alerts" to them. Do not forward to ensure you're not unsubscribed. 6. Ask about veterans of their generation and what they need. <p>Partnerships with these kinds of groups will make the legislative work we do more effective and will keep the VFW Auxiliary available and responsive to the youngest generation of veterans. It could also be a lot of fun.</p> <p>Ideas for Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact a high school, junior college or adult education civics class and ask to give a short talk on the legislative process and how it can affect our service members and their families, and then pass out <i>Action Corps Weekly</i>, the Priority Goals and copies of any "Action Alert" letters. • Team up with your Auxiliary's Scholarships and/or Youth Activities Program Sisters and Brothers to make it a joint event, reaching out to Scout Troops, youth sports teams and kids' church groups • Prominently feature copies of the Priority Goals and <i>Action Corps Weekly</i> at the Legislative booth in your Family Freedom Festival – you can create a simple game, quiz or coloring sheet that steps through the legislative process and then offer a "Random Act of Patriotism (RAP)" card or coin, or a piece of wrapped candy, for children's entries. <p>RESOURCES and WEBSITES:</p> <p>VFW Priority Goals <i>VFW Action Corps Weekly</i> "Guide to the Legislative Process"</p>	<p>"Guide to Contacting Your Legislators" "VFW Auxiliary Involvement in Elections and Political Activities" www.vfwauxiliary.org, www.vfw.org/advocacy/grassroots-efforts www.veterans.house.gov www.veterans.senate.gov www.whitehouse.gov www.thomas.gov</p> <p>AWARDS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most outstanding consistent partnership and/or communication with young adult civic and/or political groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citation to every Auxiliary that maintains a consistent partnership and/or communication with young adult civic and/or political groups. Criteria and entry form (required) available at vfwauxiliary.org/resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Legislative Chairman by March 31, 2023. <p>The Department Legislative Chairman must send a copy of all submitted entry forms to National Headquarters by April 30, 2023.</p> <p>Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences with the most outstanding consistent partnership and/or communication with young adult civic and/or political groups. Winners will be announced, and awards presented at the 2023 National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. <p>The Department Legislative Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Legislative Ambassador Bobbie Goldman by April 30, 2023, for judging.</p> <p>There will be awards for the Outstanding District Chairman and Outstanding Auxiliary Chairman. All awards will be based on the best promotion of the Legislative Program, using the criteria set forth by the National Legislative Ambassador:</p>
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1. How did your Auxiliary/District promote the VFW Priority Goals?
2. How did you educate youth on the legislative process?
3. How did your Auxiliary/District encourage members to communicate with legislators on veterans' issues?
4. How many members signed up for the Action Corps Weekly?
5. How did your Auxiliary/District communicate pending legislations and special legislative alerts?
6. How did you use the tools outlined in the "Guide to Contacting Your Legislators"?

Please contact me with any questions at 661-618-3794 and submit your reports through member login on the Department website.

Thank you.

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"None of us,
including me,
ever do great
things.

But we can all do
small things, with
great love, and
together
we can do
something
wonderful."

— Mother Teresa