



Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA
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LEGISLATIVE CHAIR
2023-2024

Greetings Auxiliary Family

I look forward to serving you as your Legislative Chairperson this year. Great things were accomplished last year with many of our Auxiliaries contacting their Legislators and responding to our Action Alerts and well as sharing Action Corp weekly with your members, and also getting out to vote. We have accomplished networking with the Department VFW Comrades with communications on State issues with the Department Legislative VFW Chair to better communicate Legislative issues that are affecting our States Veterans and their Families here in California. We will continue to also support and promote Legislative issues from National. Check promotions on the Department website and well as keep your eye out for Legislative emails.

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:

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. It is important your Auxiliary Meeting has a Legislative Chairmen given reports regularly on the Legislative issues that are important not only to our State but also National Legislative Priorities.

Some Dos and Don'ts

DO create good relationships with our elected officials and their staff by emails and/or phone calls, and by visiting their websites and sending messages to them about Veteran issues.

DO Find out their positions for specific legislation and their reasons for taking that position.

DO when communicating with elected officials and candidates for election, communicate your message in a brief, concise and clearly understood manner.

DO Identify yourself, who you represent and why you are calling.

DO Encourage members to attend town hall meetings held by legislators.

DO Host a town hall meeting which all candidates are invited to attend and comments on Veterans' issues. Develop questions for candidates and elected officials to ensure they provide answers to the questions most important to our members.

DO NOT Allow the Auxiliary to appear to endorse or support an individual candidate in local, state or federal elections. If asked by a candidate or elected official to either endorse them or their legislative bill, politely explain that the Auxiliary does not permit such endorsements.

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" and by visiting vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service. The more members know and understand what 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. We encourage our Legislative Chairmen and members to be visible in our legislative communities, both State and Federal, and is important and a responsibility each of us should share and undertake. We ask all District Chairman to reach out to their Legislative Chairmen in their Auxiliaries to ensure our member fully understand its importance.

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

Resources

Ensure your Auxiliary knows about the resources in MALTA and the VFW.

Action Corps Weekly Sign up page: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm>

VFW National Auxiliary: <https://vfwauxiliary.org/>

VFW CA Auxiliary: <http://vfwauxca.org/>

VFW Auxiliary Guide to Contacting your Legislators.

VFW Auxiliary Guide to the Legislative Process.

Action Corps Weekly

- **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.

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

California Senate Bill 245 (2019-2020) “Pets for Vets Act” and Awards

I am very excited to bring this year a new program to promote Senate Bill 245 which passed in California in late 2019 and early 2020. Similar bills have passed in many other States. Because California was in a Covid-19 lockdown, this bill passed without much fan fare or awareness, and I am pleased to have been given authorization from our Department VFW Commander and Auxiliary President to reach back and promote this Bill. SB 245 called “Pets for Vets Act” gives all Veterans the ability to adopt cats and dogs without adoption fees from all State shelters. Many Shelters are not aware of its passing. To promote awareness, I am asking Auxiliaries to make posters to hang in each of their local shelters, as well as in their VFW post to raise awareness of this great bill for our Veterans. We all know how pets help our Veterans that suffer from PTSD and other issues. Whether the animal is service dog trained or a companion pet, it makes a huge difference for our Veterans quality of life. Therefore, the Department Legislative Program will Provide a Citation to the winning poster in each of the 8 Divisions as well as participation citations for each Auxiliary.

More information about this Bill can be found at

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB245

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.

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 XX and for the promotion of the Program Goals listed at the top of Page XX. Winners will be announced, and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.



In Service,
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