

**Legislative Program
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Advocates in Action

Welcome to the 2024-2025 Legislative Program year! As your California VFW Auxiliary State Legislative Chairman, I'm thrilled to introduce our Department President Sharonda Lewis's theme for this year: "***Growing in Service for Our Veterans, Rooted in Strength,***" symbolized by "***The Tree of Life.***" Our National President, Brenda Bryant's theme is "***From Our Roots to Our Branches: Extending Service to Our Veterans.***" Guided by their themes as we embark on a journey of commitment, compassion, and community, it is with great pride and anticipation that we unveil the Legislative Program that will shape our service to veterans throughout California.

Our focus remains on advocating for veterans' rights and welfare across California. Through legislative initiatives and community outreach, we aim to amplify veteran voices and secure crucial benefits and healthcare services.

Elevating Our Advocacy: The Legislative Program serves as the foundation for all VFW Auxiliary initiatives, rooted in the very essence of why the VFW and Auxiliary were established. The annually-released *VFW Legislative Priority Goals* form the blueprint for our endeavors on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. (www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service). Each VFW Auxiliary Program aligns with and supports these *Priority Goals*, enhancing our collective impact and ensuring our voices resonate effectively.

Understanding the significance of the Legislative Program magnifies the potency of our advocacy efforts, amplifying our voices in support of our veterans.

Local Action, Global Impact: While monitoring federal legislation remains crucial, we must not overlook the profound influence of local government and laws on the lives of our veterans. It is at the local level that our advocacy truly begins.

Engaging with VFW Posts: Collaboration with our home Posts is paramount. By pooling resources and sharing ideas, we can maximize the effectiveness of our efforts. From joint projects to coordinated letter-writing campaigns, we strengthen our impact on legislative matters.

Connecting with Local Government: Engaging with elected officials at the local level is vital. Through education and outreach, we empower them with knowledge about veteran issues and the *VFW Priority Goals*. Inviting them to VFW- and Auxiliary-sponsored events fosters dialogue and fortifies our advocacy endeavors.

Cultivating Strength Through Service: Our Department President's theme underscores our unwavering dedication of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary to uphold the legacy of service and sacrifice. We recognize that our strength lies not only in our history but also in our collective efforts to nurture and support our veterans, their families, and the communities they call home. Like the mighty tree firmly rooted in the earth, our service branches out to provide shelter, sustenance, and solace to those in need.

Branching Out with Purpose: The Legislative Program for the 2024-2025 year stands as a testament to our commitment to advocacy and action. Through legislative initiatives, grassroots campaigns, and community outreach, we will amplify the voices of our veterans, champion their rights, and ensure they receive the respect and care they deserve. From securing vital benefits to addressing critical healthcare needs, we will leave no stone unturned in our quest to serve those who have served us with honor and valor.

Nurturing Growth, Inspiring Change: Just as the tree evolves with each passing season, so too shall our Auxiliary as we adapt to the changing needs of our veterans and communities. We embrace innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity as we strive to foster an environment where every member has the opportunity to thrive and make a meaningful difference. Together, we will cultivate a legacy of service that transcends boundaries and leaves an indelible mark on the lives of those we touch.

Working Together in Building a Brighter Future: As we embark on this new program year, I extend a heartfelt invitation to every member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary to join us in our mission. Whether you are a seasoned advocate or a newcomer to the cause, your voice, your passion, and your dedication are invaluable assets in our collective journey. Together, we will plant the seeds of change, nurture them with care, and watch as they blossom into a future where every veteran is honored, respected, and supported.

Effective Advocates: Effective advocacy requires understanding the legislative process and speaking the language of change. Here's how we can enhance our advocacy efforts:

- Familiarize ourselves with the *VFW Priority Goals*, then share this knowledge with fellow VFW and Auxiliary members in meetings or newsletters.
- Stay informed about where elected officials stand on veteran issues and be ready to draft letters for upcoming legislation.
- Subscribe to the *VFW Action Corps Weekly* and encourage others to do the same.
- Act promptly on VFW Action Alerts and encourage others to join in.
- Participate in town hall meetings and rally others to attend.
- Exercise our right to vote in all elections and assist others in the voting process.

- Utilize the MALTA Member Resources, and Legislative, and educate others on what's available.
- Remember not to endorse any candidate on behalf of VFW Auxiliary; we must remain neutral.
- Refrain from wearing VFW Auxiliary attire while campaigning for any candidate.

In closing, let us remember that the strength of the tree lies not only in its roots but also in its ability to reach for the sky. May we, too, reach ever higher in our service to our veterans, our communities, and each other. Let's be proactive advocates, driving positive change for our veterans and communities.

National Legislative Program Awards

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most Outstanding activity and/or event collaborating with the VFW Post connecting members with lawmakers.
 - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions with the most outstanding activity and/or event that collaborated with the VFW Post connecting members with local lawmakers.

Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to their Department Legislative Chairman by March 31, 2025, for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from the National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2025 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

Award for Departments and Department Chairman

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Legislative Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of ensuring elected officials are educated on the importance of VFW Legislative goals and veterans' rights.
2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed in the National Program Book.

Winners will be announced, and awards will be presented at the 2025 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

Department Legacy Awards

A Legacy Award will be awarded to one Outstanding Auxiliary Chairman for best Performance in the Legislative Program.

These are the questions you should try to answer when you make your reports about your Auxiliary's Legislative projects online. Include sufficient details in your description to help your Department Chairman recognize your accomplishments. Select the appropriate "Activity" when completing your report.

VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Legislative 2024-2025

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.
This report to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: _____ Number of participating Auxiliaries: _____

1. Number of Auxiliaries that promoted, participated, hosted or co-hosted with their VFW Post activities regarding the VFW Priority Goals. _____
2. Number of Auxiliary members who contacted their legislators on veterans' issues by any means (example: emails, letters, postcards, phone calls, etc.) _____
3. Number of Auxiliary members who attended events where they could interact with legislators (example: legislative conferences, town halls, meet-and-greets, etc.) _____

Department Chairman signature: _____

Date: _____ Conference: _____