

# NEW YORK STATE OVERSEAS VETERAN

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 Veterans of Foreign Wars  
 of the United States



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## James Durkin State Commander



With the end of the year fast approaching, the Department of New York ranks 27th in Membership nationally with 94%. The largest issue we are having with membership is our own back door. We are letting members walk out that door. If we were to get half the members who did not renew their membership in

the last three years, we would be well over 100% this year. The good news is that every District Commander, District Membership Chair and Post Quartermaster has access to this information. We still have time yet this year to use this list to invite these former comrades back. With a 20% goal, we can still make it.

At last year's State Convention, we (as a group) rejected a Bylaw to increase the yearly dues. During the debate on this issue I said that if we do not get the dues

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## Michael Pascal Sr. Vice Commander



Greetings Comrades, As we enter into the last quarter of the 2012-2013 year, we must all try to remain focused on the tasks ahead, first and foremost being membership. We all

need to support our Department by working on new members and, as always, retain those continuous members who have not submitted their annual dues. Our Department Commander James Durkin has set the bar very high at 120%. If we all work together and not give up, I do believe we can achieve this goal; if not, we can come close.

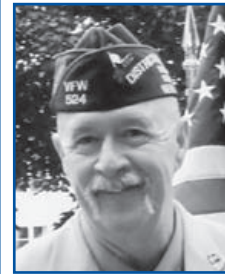
We also need to support our State Commander's Special Project, which are Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen, two of our youth programs which desperately need your donations. We are behind in their monetary awards funds to the extent that our next two State Commanders have pledged to have these two programs as part of their State Commander's Special Project for their administrative years.

Buddy Poppies have fallen off in Post participation. We all must realize that this particular program not only helps our Department, but it is also a great way for each and every Post to help support its own relief fund.

Comrades, I hope you will all join with me and remain focused and hard at work so we may reach our goals.

SR. VICE, continued on page 2

## William "Doc" Schmitz Jr. Vice Commander



Many letters, emails and phone calls, all complaining about both Auxiliaries and VFW members, have consumed many, many agonizing hours over the past months. Each communication

accusing each other of all sorts of things you can only begin to imagine.

Recently, I was sent to a Post to assess their issues and mediate, if possible, the situations that have plagued them for a very long time. In an open meeting many things came out that were red flags for problems far

JR. VICE, continued on page 2

## Robert Barnhart Quartermaster

### Donations Down for Department of New York

It is certainly a sad situation when the Department of New York Quartermaster must state that our financial condition has changed little since my last report and, if anything, it has gotten even worse. Currently, the Department of New York is experiencing a dramatic reduction in donations. Donations from calendars, cards, paper and labels are **down by 80%**. That's

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Photographer:



John Brunato



Editor:



Don Mackey

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 NYSOV



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## New York State Overseas Veteran

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### \*\* PUBLICATIONS:

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### \*\* ARTICLES:

Articles: Any and all articles involving and/or including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, its members, member communities, awards and activities are welcome.

### \*\* SUBMISSION & FORMAT:

Please prepare all articles in Microsoft Word (version 2003 or newer) or plain text. JPG/JPEG is the only picture format accepted and captions are appropriate. E-mail all articles and pictures as attachments with the sender's name, address and phone number in the base of the e-mail. Submissions from other sources must have complete credits such as publication name, address and dates published.

### \*\* EDITORIAL POLICY:

Inappropriate, demeaning, unduly critical articles and/or statements will not be published. Article length, inaccuracies, composition and other miscellaneous errors and/or mistakes may be edited.

Although every effort is made to maintain an honorable and accurate publication, the Department of New York and/or its staff, editor and other publication participants are not responsible for the content, views and/or positions of any article(s)/submissions.

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### \*\* DEADLINE:

Deadline: Articles must be submitted by the 15th of each month...July, October, January and April.

If you are using regular mail, send the items to CITadmin, P.O. Box 116, Carlisle, NY 12031.

### \*\* GRAPHIC DESIGN & LAYOUT:

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Emily McKenna, Graphic Designer  
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*COMMANDER, continued from page 1*

increase, we might have to change the way we do conferences in the future. This year's Spring Conference is the first change. The dues increase would not have helped this year's conference. The change is due to the decrease in planned income in other areas. The conference format needed to be changed in order to keep the budget in balance. If these income losses continue, we will have to change the way we do things in the future.

By the time this comes out in print, The Washington Conference will be over. Your Department officers and Legislative team will have finished being your voice in Washington. I know they will have given 100% on your behalf. I only wish we had a larger voice this year.

We have a very important event coming up this summer. Yes, the State Convention in Buffalo, New York. Here you will elect your leaders for the Department of New York and I will complete my year as your State Commander. You have a say in your future leaders of this Department. Your VOTE counts; be there and vote. Just remember you need to *register as a delegate* to vote and speak at the Convention. I hope to see a lot of new faces at this year's Convention.

If I do not see you during my travels before the Convention, I hope to see you at the State Convention in Buffalo.

Wishing you all the best and have a successful year.

Serving for you,  
**James Durkin**  
State Commander

*SR. VICE, continued from page 1*

Again, if you need my help, don't hesitate to call or email.

Yours in Comradeship,  
**Michael Pascal**  
State Sr. Vice Commander  
Cell: 518-925-2302  
Email: [pascal8172@aol.com](mailto:pascal8172@aol.com)

## VFW Supports the Constitution

The subject of gun control, the NY SAFE ACT, Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act of 2013 came up at the recent Department of New York Spring Conference in Saratoga Springs.

One of the C of A members asked what position the New York VFW was taking on gun control. After a brief discussion State Commander Durkin stated, "We support the Constitution" after which the C of A endorsed that position.

*JR. VICE, continued from page 1*

more complex than I could have anticipated.

A basic exam of the bookkeeping procedures and bell jar accounting exposed a plethora of problematic and critical issues. My recommendation to the Department Commander was to send in two of our most experienced officers for a more in depth examination and audit. The team assembled was myself, the Department's Quartermaster, Judge Advocate and Chief of Staff. We spent an entire day reviewing financial statements, minutes of meetings, interviewing officers as well as employees and, later in the day we had a very depressing lunch as we discussed our findings.

That night we had a general open meeting with about thirty members present. It was announced by the Chairman of our team, the Department Judge Advocate, that they were now in Trusteeship with me as the Trustee Chairperson. We then proceeded to meet with members collecting all keys, counted monies, secure codes and combinations and escorted all members from the Post, notified the local police and secured the building.

Try looking into the eyes of those members...it is so very sad! They had just been ejected from their own Post – the VFW home they built, nursed and cherished for years. Hopefully the Post can be salvaged with the help of the Department and many committed members. Maybe with hard work, determination and commitment, the devoted members that are left after culling out the bad seeds can make a new beginning. We don't need to lose any more Posts; far too many are dying because of neglect, complacency, dishonesty and outright theft.

I wish you all could have been there to see and feel the pain and sadness. DON'T LET IT BE YOUR POST! Stay on top of things, ask questions, demand accountability and insure the Bylaws are followed to the letter. Don't let your Post crash and burn and don't fan the flames of destruction, but extinguish them before they create the ashes of what used to be.

**William 'Doc' Schmitz**  
Jr. Vice Commander

**VFW DEPARTMENT of NEW YORK**  
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**OVERSEAS VETERAN**

Contact CITadmin for pricing and  
additional information.  
**CITadmin@VFWNY.COM**

*QUARTERMASTER, continued from page 1*

right **80%** – which is about a **\$79,000 loss** wvto our general budget. That is a significant loss of revenues and puts us in quite a precarious position.

Many members don't realize the mailings they receive in the mail are requests for donations for the Department of New York *not* National. Even though the mailings come from Gunner Kent or the National Commander in Chief, 100% of the revenues received from these solicitations go to the Department of New York, not National VFW. When the cards, labels and calendar sales requests are automatically tossed into the trash, the Department of New York loses that much more strength and effectiveness for veterans.

Some members have voiced their concerns about receiving so many mailings requesting money, especially after sending in several donations. Unfortunately, the system is automated and the computer program doesn't record the giving – it just sends out the mailings.

There is a way to eliminate these mailings. Sign up for monthly donations to be taken directly from your financial institution account or credit card. That puts the member's name into a database and removes them from the monthly mailing list. Members should decide how much they feel they can donate to the VFW, Department of New York and set up a monthly amount that will accommodate that sum.

Sign onto **VFW.ORG** with your member login and select "Contributions". The link to the right will take you directly to that site. Donations support all of our Veterans and Community Programs making the VFW a visible and viable force for veterans.

Become a VFW Partner in Patriotism, and you'll be providing the backbone of support for VFW's programs that are saving veterans, service members and their families every day.

Your monthly donation right now will help disabled veterans cut through bureaucratic tape to get their VA benefits, help returning troops transition to civilian life and help military families who can't make ends meet. Learn more about what your gift delivers.

#### **MONTHLY GIVING**

Go to **VFW.ORG**, log in click on **CONTRIBUTE** (at top in menu bar) then look for **Find out more about giving to VFW**; (about mid page) and select **MONTHLY GIVING**. Fill out the form and you have selected the most effective, efficient and powerful veterans' financial support system that goes directly to the Department of New York.

#### **Why Give Monthly?**

- The most efficient way to support America's veterans
- Stretches your donation further by keeping costs down
- Provides "at the ready" funds to handle emergencies and growing program needs
- Every penny goes to YOUR Department of New York

Become a **VFW Partner in Patriotism** and get this **FREE Patriotic Tote Bag** honoring your steadfast commitment to veterans.



Again...consider a monthly gift to stop the repeated mail requests. Read Monthly Giving again.

The only stable financial condition is our Morgan-Stanley investments. With those investments we have had neither a loss nor gain, with very respectable earnings. As long as we avoid the temptation of dipping into the fund to relieve the pressure on the budget the fund will continue to grow. The growth of the fund took many years but could be depleted in short order without determined financial management.

Another more insidious reason for our

financial dilemma is falling membership. We are not replacing ourselves! We are not recruiting and more importantly...we are not retaining those we did recruit, they are sliding right out the back door and no one is watching. Recruitment and retention ensures we have young vibrant, energetic and exciting veterans ready to take the helm as we age and become less active. Let's face it – we are not getting any younger – that's a fact. No matter how young we may feel we just cannot keep up with the younger generation of veterans. They are the new blood we need if the VFW is to survive and remain the pivotal veterans' organization in the Department of New York.

We are losing 4,000 members per year! It isn't just their dues or Life Membership recoup amounts, it's the estimated \$100 per member spent on VFW projects by each member. That correlates to about \$40,000 lost each and every year. So why are they leaving? They are leaving because we don't retain them. We are losing them to the ages as they depart this life and we are losing them to illness, frailty and infirmities. Those losses correlate to about \$40,000 a year in lost revenues. Some believe it's crass to relate lost members to lost cash, but it's a fact; without members we are no longer effective – we can't grow, we can't even maintain our regular programs, we begin to deteriorate and evaporate into oblivion. Without members, we no longer matter and all the work and veteran support advances of the past become just that – history – and without members, history won't matter.

If we continue to lose 4,000 members per year without replacing even some of them, in about 18 years the Department of New York VFW will be gone and the loss of revenues won't matter. Devotion, commitment and love for the VFW won't matter either because it will have died a slow and agonizing death. Gone forever!

***Bring Our Troops  
Home Safely!***

## Harold "Hal" Burke, Jr.

State Judge Advocate



Comrades,

The Department continues to assist those Posts struggling with internal and financial issues. We believe that a number of factors are contributing to these problems. Most of the issues stem from the lack of understanding of those holding Post Offices of the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedures. Specifically Article II – Posts, Section 218, Officers and Chairman, Duties and Obligations.

Some of the contributing factors that lead up to the "big Post issue" should be identified when the Post Trustees conduct the Quarterly Post Audit and/or when the District Inspector performs the Annual Post Inspection. When the Department begins researching a Post issue, the Trustee's Report of Audit, the Post Inspection and their annual IRS 990 are among the first documents that are reviewed, along with any written concerns received by the State Commander. In most cases the Trustee's Report of Audit and the Post Inspection are usually incomplete, inaccurate or simply pencil-whipped. No one likes to report adverse information but for the survival of our Posts and Organization, reporting what you have observed and compliance of Local, State and National Laws along with the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure is the key to success within a Post. The earlier a problem is detected, the sooner corrective actions can be put in place.

The War Dads relationship with the VFW is being questioned by some of our Posts. Based on our research we have found nothing within the National or Department Bylaws that identifies the Wars Dads as an authorized adjunct to the VFW.

To clarify the title of this unit, the correct designation for the War Dads is "*Dads of Foreign Service*." So that we do not further convolute this article, we will refer to this unit as the War Dads.

I reached out to the National VFW to understand their view on the War Dads and this was the response received. "*Resolution 107 passed at the 90th Convention merely allows Posts to get credit for community service, but under no circumstances does it make the Dads of Foreign Service an authorized auxiliary or subordinate unit of the VFW. The relationship of cooperation has continued through the years. Although the National Organization does not have any objections to an individual Post support of*

*such units, it is understood that the Dads of Foreign Service is a separate organization and not an auxiliary organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars*".

War Dads are in no way to be treated as or considered members of the VFW Post. They should not be in charge of or have access to Post, Corporation or Canteen properties, funds or operations. War Dads may not be extended VFW Member rights or privileges. However, War Dads may assist at functions and receive the same invitation to socialization as non-members.

***We have received questions in regard to the Convention fee and the Department Delegate Registration fee. Remember amendments to the Department were passed at last year's State Convention to raise the Convention Fee to Seven dollars for advance fee payment and Ten dollars at the door.***

Also, all Posts must register in Advance one Post Delegate to the State Convention and the fee is Ten dollars. Post delegate advance registration is due by the closing of the Department Membership Program which is May 3, 2013. Please read the Bylaw excerpt provided below for more details.

**Article VII, Section 4.00 – Department Delegate registration fee – THIS IS NEW**

Each Post will pay, in advance to the Department of NY a Department Delegate registration fee of ten dollars (\$10) which shall entitle the Post to one identified registered delegate for the Department Convention. Each additional delegate attending the Department Convention will pay a five dollar (\$5) delegate fee. The Notification is in the Department Convention Packets for this year.

This new Bylaw requires each Post in New York to register at minimum one Post Delegate to the Department Convention.

The National Bylaws, Article II Sec. 213 Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions. Addresses this issue: Any Post in arrears for any financial obligations to County Council (if applicable), District, Department and National for fees, dues, Poppy money, supply money, failing to have the office of Quartermaster properly bonded in accordance with Section 703, failing to ensure that the Post is properly insured in accordance with Section 709, failing to submit properly completed quarterly Post Trustees Report of Audit, Post-Election Report for the ensuing year or other obligations, shall be deprived of all representation in County Council meetings (if applicable), District, Department and National Conventions. Such representation shall be restored promptly upon proper adjustment of such deficiencies.

Posts will receive notification of delegate fees from the State Adjutant after January 1 of the delegate registration fees payable to

the Department of New York for 2012-2013.

### Article XIII Miscellaneous

Sec. 4.00 It shall be permissible for the Convention Corporation to charge a fee, in their discretion, not to exceed Seven dollars (\$7.00) for advance registration and Ten dollars (\$10.00) for registration at the Convention Site, for the Convention badge, Program and any other items that they may wish to include in the form of entertainment for the delegates and visitors.

This fee registers a delegate/member for the Convention only.

Please do not confuse this Convention fee with Article VII SECTION 4.00 – Department Delegate Registration fee.

Also, please see the information below as it relates to the County Council Annual Convention.

**Sec. 2.04 – Regular and Special Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees. (was Article III Sec 3.05)**

Each County Council shall hold an annual County Council Convention for the purpose of electing County Council officers and for the transaction of business; such Convention to be held not less than ten (10) days nor more than forty-five (45) days prior to the convening of the Department Convention.

This adjustment for the time period in which a County Convention can be held is consistent with the changes made to the date of the National Convention.

I pledge my continued support to the Officers and members of the Department of New York. Once again, thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as the State Judge Advocate.

If I can ever be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 518-598-3923.

Sincerely,

**Harold "Hal" Burke Jr., PSC/PSQM  
State Judge Advocate**



## Dennis Sullivan

State Surgeon



Comrades, it has been four months since we felt the affects of Hurricane Sandy but, of course, the veterans are still trying to get their lives back in order with many more years of construction ahead of them.

We were able to help several hundred VFW and Ladies Auxiliary members and the recipients were so grateful to the VFW Department of New York for putting a little sunshine in their lives at such an unfortunate time.

On February 8, 2013, my area of Suffolk County was blanketed with a blizzard of 33 inches of snow. After surviving Hurricane Sandy, we had to deal with more snow than we had ever seen, crippling our area for days. As New Yorkers, we survived another storm.

Disasters keep happening and us New Yorkers keep getting challenged. As one veteran said to me, "we might be bruised and battered, but we are not broken." We can keep going and survive each incident that is thrown at us, but not without the help of our brothers and sisters of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary. Please continue to donate to our emergency relief fund. It is so important to keep it going. We must be prepared to help those who will be affected by the next disaster.

I am still in touch with the Commanders of the Post that were affected by Hurricane Sandy. They keep me updated with the progress of rebuilding the Post.

If I can be of help to anyone, my email is [dmsullivan9@optimum.net](mailto:dmsullivan9@optimum.net) or you can call me on my cell at 631-848-3486.

Please send your donations to Dept. of New York, 69 Sand Creek Road, Albany, NY 12205 and put a memo on it that it is for the Emergency Relief Fund.

Yours in Comradeship,  
**Dennis Sullivan**  
 State Surgeon

## Distinguished Warfare Medal Ranking Is A Disgrace



To All VFW Department, District and Post Commanders:

I learned today that the Department of Defense will not lower the ranking of its new Distinguished Warfare Medal, which now ranks 9th highest out of five dozen current medals and ribbons in the

order of precedence – and you don't have to go to war to earn it!

I cannot tell you how displeased I am with the new defense secretary for not overriding what has proven to be an extremely divisive decision by his predecessor, but the buck hasn't stopped yet. We have many friends in Congress who agree 100 percent with our position to lower the medal's precedence to below the Purple Heart – and they have introduced companion bills in both the House and Senate to do just that – but the VFW needs you to get the other members of Congress off their duffs and become cosponsors of H.R. 833 and S. 470.

This VFW-supported legislation has

bipartisan support because it is the right thing to do for the troops who go into harm's way and not home every night. This is a policy disagreement over the placement of the new medal, not whether drone operators, cyber warriors and others don't deserve to be properly recognized for the tremendous impact they are bringing to the battlefield in real-time. The VFW just adamantly believes that medals that can only be earned in combat must rank higher than new medals awarded in the rear.

I am asking you to contact every VFW Post, member and supporter you can find – today. We need you to light up Congress' phones lines and emails to let them know that this issue is very important to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and to their voting constituents and families at home.

To contact your members of Congress, go to <http://capwiz.com/vfw/issues/alert/?alertid=62485196>

Yours in Comradeship,  
**John E. Hamilton**  
 Commander-in-Chief

## State Convention Delegate Registration

For the past three or four years, the Department has been utilizing technology to make the registration procedure at the State Convention more efficient, accurate and less labor intensive. The 2013 Convention has even more registration advances in store to simplify and streamline the process. All Bylaw requirements and rules remain in force and will not be compromised. As always, all delegates must register and be certified by the Credentials Committee. Credentials from the appropriate Posts must have the required signatures with no exceptions. All delegates must have their ID cards as specified on the credential's slip. Due to the nature of the technology and program requirements, once a delegate is registered, no changes will be made.

This year, delegates will present their VFW ID cards *along with* their official delegate slip at the delegate registration table. If you don't have a VFW ID or delegate slip...you will *not* be registered as a delegate! The member ID number will be entered and if they are a member in good standing, which also means 'paid up', they

will be verified and a yellow 'Delegate' label will be printed. This label will be pasted on the back of the Convention ID (suspended from the lanyard) for easy identification on the Convention floor. Delegates not wearing the Convention ID on the lanyard with the yellow 'Delegate' label will not be allowed to vote or address the Convention. The yellow label *must be visible and verified* by the Sergeant-at-Arms!

The Post Delegate Invoice form (*to list Post delegates*) can be downloaded from the Department website at [WWW.VFWNY.COM](http://WWW.VFWNY.COM) under "Dept. NY" then "Forms". Look for "Delegate Invoice". The Quartermaster should fill out the form and send it to department headquarters with a check to cover the Post dues, plus the dues for each delegate. The cost is \$10.00 for the first delegate, which covers the Post dues of \$5.00 and the delegate fee of \$5.00. Then the Quartermaster will list all delegates with their Member ID # and the cost of \$5.00 per delegate after the first entry. The allocated number of delegates for each Post is listed on the MemStats report, which is online as well.



# 94th Department of NY Veterans of Foreign Wars 88th Department of NY Ladies Auxiliary State Convention • Buffalo, New York June 12-16, 2013



## City of Good Neighbors

DAVID CZARNECKI, *President*  
NICKOLAS FREDERES, *Vice President*  
EDWARD SITEK, *Treasurer*  
DEBORAH A. FUCINA, *Secretary*  
KATHERINE E. MACRIS, *Auxiliary Coordinator*



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Roy Bonham  
Robin Giles  
Raymond Peterson  
Raymond Warlikowski  
Daniel McMahon  
Marlene Roll

Dear Comrades and Sisters:

The **94th Department of New York Veterans of Foreign Wars** and **88th Department of New York Ladies Auxiliary Convention** will be held in Buffalo, New York on **June 12-16, 2013**. Headquarters for both the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary will be at the Adam's Mark Hotel located at 120 Church Street, Buffalo, New York (directions are included below). All VFW and AUX activities will be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel. There is complimentary parking at the hotel with in and out privileges. Convention information and forms can be found on the VFW ([www.vfwny.com](http://www.vfwny.com)) and AUX ([www.lavfwny.com](http://www.lavfwny.com)) websites.

**VIP Housing** (Dan McMahon and Kathy Macris): for VFW and AUX State Officers, VIPs, Special Guests and Vendors. Rates are \$109 per room per night. VIP room reservations will be available on **March 9, 2013 and will end on March 26, 2013**. All VIP reservations received after that date will be processed as a General Housing reservation. **VIPs must make their reservations by contacting the Adam's Mark directly at 716-845-5100.**

**General Housing** (Dan McMahon and Kathy Macris): Room rates are \$109 per room per night. General Housing reservations will be available March 26-May 22, 2013. Room reservations will be handled by calling the Adam's Mark directly at 716-845-5100 or using their website link: [https://reservations.ihotelier.com/crs/g\\_reservation.cfm?groupID=857652&hotelID=15259](https://reservations.ihotelier.com/crs/g_reservation.cfm?groupID=857652&hotelID=15259) or by using the Convention link at [www.vfwny.com](http://www.vfwny.com) or [www.vfwnyaux.com](http://www.vfwnyaux.com)

**Hospitality & Suite Reservations** (Nick Frederes): All Hospitality and Suite Reservations must be requested by contacting Nick Frederes: 3657 Harris Hill Road, Falconer, NY 14733 or phone 716-665-4383 or email [nick.frederes@gmail.com](mailto:nick.frederes@gmail.com). **The deadline date is May 22, 2013. The hotel will not accept direct reservations.**

**Pre-Registration** (Ray and Joanne Warlikowski, VFW and Kay Cooper, Auxiliary): Pre-Registration fee of \$7.00 per delegate includes Convention Badge and Program. Pre-Registration forms for VFW and AUX are shown below. Register early and be eligible to win \$50.00 (VFW) and \$50.00 (AUX) – winner need not be present. Registration at the Convention will be \$10.00 per delegate. **Pre-Registration deadline is May 22, 2013.** Enclosed is a Department

of NY Convention registration form (\$10.00 fee), which is separate from the delegate registration. ***This fee must be paid to vote at Convention.***

**Program Ad Book & Booster Sheets** (Marlene Roll): Advertising Contract and Layout Sheet below. Check must accompany your **copy ready ad** and contract. Checks are made payable to the "**2013 Annual VFW Convention Corp**". **Ad deadline is May 10, 2013.** Please note for each \$250 in business or political ads an individual or Post submits, they will receive \$25. Also, Post and Auxiliaries submitting full-page ads are entered in a raffle for a prize of \$250.

### Wednesday, June 12:

3:00 p.m. AUX Ritualistic Floor Rehearsal  
5:30 p.m. C of A Dinner (by invitation only)  
7:00 p.m. C of A Meeting (open to all AUX)

### Thursday, June 13:

8:00 a.m. AUX Opening Business Session  
10:00 a.m. VFW Committee Meetings  
12:15 p.m. Joint Opening and Memorial Services  
– Assembly in Grand Hall  
1:00 p.m. Joint Opening and Memorial Services  
(Raymond Peterson, Jerzy Folta and Nina LeFrois): Presentation of VFW and Ladies Auxiliary Colors and Memorial Service is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 13 in the Grand Ballroom of the Adam's Mark. Awards will be presented to Districts and Counties with American Flag and Colors. Commanders/Presidents Awards will be presented to the District and County with the most Colors. **Proper Attire Required. NO T-shirts, shorts, jeans, sandals.**  
7:00 p.m. State Commander and President Dinner (Roy and Terry Bonham). Dinner tickets are \$38 per person. Information and reservation form are below. Tickets must be prepaid by check or money order and made payable to the "2013 Annual VFW Convention

*LADIES AUXILIARY STATE CONVENTION, continued from page 7* —

Corp". Table reservations are available for groups of eight (8) only. Dinner choices: Stuffed Chicken with Ricotta, Spinach & Artichokes with a Rosemary Crème Sauce; Flank Steak with a Merlot Demi Glaze; or Flounder Meuniere. Dinner reservation deadline is May 22.

**Friday, June 14 (FLAG DAY):**

- 8:00 a.m. VFW Opening Business Session  
AUX Business Session
- 12 Noon Auxiliary President's Award Luncheon (Clara Dunbar): Cost is \$23 per person. Information and reservation form below. Deadline is May 22. Please make your check payable to the "Dept. of NY Ladies AUX VFW".
- 7:00 p.m. Patriotic Concert featuring Ricky Lee

**Saturday, June 15:**

- 8:00 a.m. VFW and& AUX Business Sessions,  
Elections and Installations
- 5:00 p.m.-  
8:00 p.m. Commander's and President's Reception

We are looking forward to providing you with an exciting and enjoyable State Convention.

Sincerely,  
**David Czarnecki, President**  
**Department Convention Corporation**

**DIRECTIONS to Adam's Mark Hotel, 120 Church Street, Buffalo, NY 14202 (www.Adamsmark.com)**

**From the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport (9 miles):**

Take the Kensington Expressway (33W) to 90 West to Exit 53 (Buffalo Downtown, I-190 North), exit on Church Street, turn right. EAST (also Rochester and Albany): Follow I-90 West to Exit 53 (Buffalo Downtown, I-190 North), exit on Church Street, turn right. WEST and SOUTH: Follow I-90 East to Exit 53 (Buffalo Downtown, I-190 North), exit on Church Street, turn right. NORTH: Follow I-190 South, exit on Church Street and turn right.

**From New York City:**

Take I-87 North to I-90 West to Exit 53 (Buffalo Downtown, I-190 North), exit on Church Street, turn right.

*Sponsored by:*

*District Six (Erie, Cattaraugus-Allegany and Chautauqua County Councils)*



**94th Department of New York  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
88th Department of New York  
Ladies Auxiliary  
State Convention • Buffalo, New York**

**Ad Program Book Order Form**

As with every VFW Convention, the Ad Book is critical to its success. In order to promote a successful Convention Ad Book, a sales commission promotion has been added.

For every \$250 in ads the submitting individual, Post or group submits, will receive \$25. Post and Auxiliaries submitting full-page ads are entered in a raffle for a prize of \$250. Please check one ad per page:

_____	<b>Full Page B&amp;W Ad</b>	<b>\$90.00 (5-1/2" x 8")</b>
_____	<b>Full Page Color Ad</b>	<b>\$115.00 (5-1/2" x 8")</b>
_____	<b>Half Page B&amp;W Ad</b>	<b>\$60.00 (5-1/2" x 4")</b>
_____	<b>Half Page Color Ad</b>	<b>\$75.00 (5-1/2" x 4")</b>
_____	<b>Quarter Page B&amp;W Ad</b>	<b>\$35.00 (2-3/4" x 4")</b>
_____	<b>Quarter Page Color Ad</b>	<b>\$50.00 (2-3/4" x 4")</b>
_____	<b>Business Card B&amp;W Ad</b>	<b>\$15.00</b>
_____	<b>Business Card Color Ad</b>	<b>\$30.00</b>

All ads in the Program Ad Book will be published in black and white. If a colored logo or type is used in the ad, there will be an additional \$15 charge in addition to the cost of the black and white ad. Pictures included on full-page ads only at an additional \$20 per ad.

**Please Note:** Your ad will be placed in the Program Ad Book as close to the layout submitted for publication. If your ad includes any clip art other than the VFW or Auxiliary logo, please email your clip art in a .jpeg picture format to **mroll2@verizon.net** clearly stating which ad the clip art is for, Post number and your contact phone number and/or email address.

Make all checks or money orders payable to:  
**2013 ANNUAL VFW CONVENTION CORP.**

Mail your ad and full payment to:  
Marlene Roll  
13492 Henskee Road  
Alden, NY 14004  
mroll2@verizon.net  
716-937-4549

**All ads must be received on or before May 10, 2013.**

**NON-VFW ADS ONLY**

**Name of Seller:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Business Name:** \_\_\_\_\_



**94th Department of New York Veterans of Foreign Wars  
88th Department of New York Ladies Auxiliary  
State Convention • Buffalo, New York**

**VFW PRE-REGISTRATION FORM**

*Type or Print Clearly*

Please include an email or home address for each person to receive a Confirmation Number.

**Email Is Preferred**

Pre-Registration Is \$7.00 Per Person. Registration at Convention is \$10 Per Person.

Post #	CC	Dist.	Name	Title	E-mail or Home Address

**Total Registrations:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to: "2013 Annual VFW Convention Corp" and MAIL FORM & CHECK TO:  
Raymond Warlikowski, 3516 Werle Road, Dunkirk, NY 14048. Phone: 716-203-7150**

**Pre-Registrations must be received by May 22, 2013 – NO EXCEPTIONS.  
Name Entered for \$50 Drawing – Need Not Be Present to Win.**

**LADIES AUXILIARY PRE-REGISTRATION FORM**

*Type or Print Clearly*

Please include an email or home address for each person to receive a Confirmation Number.

**Email Is Preferred**

Pre-Registration Is \$7.00 Per Person. Registration at Convention is \$10 Per Person.

Post #	CC	Dist.	Name	Title	E-mail or Home Address

**Total Registrations:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to: "2013 AUX Convention Committee" and MAIL FORM & CHECK TO:  
Kay Cooper, 9670 Route 446, Cuba, NY 14727. Phone: 585-968-2116**

**Pre-Registrations must be received by May 22, 2013 – NO EXCEPTIONS.  
Name Entered for \$50 Drawing – Need Not Be Present to Win.**



**94th Department of New York  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
88th Department of New York Ladies Auxiliary  
State Convention • Buffalo, New York**

Adam’s Mark Hotel, 120 Church Street, Buffalo, NY 14202  
716-845-5100

**Housing Chairmen:**  
**VFW: Dan McMahon**  
**AUX: Kathy Macris**

The Adam’s Mark Hotel is pleased to host the 94th Annual Veterans of Foreign Wars and 88th Ladies Auxiliary State Convention. VIP Reservations must be made by calling the hotel directly at 716-845-5100 from March 9-26, 2013. All VIP Reservations received after that date will be processed as a General Housing reservation.

All General Housing Reservations must be made individually through the Adam’s Mark Hotel Reservations at 716-845-5100 or online at [https://reservations.ihotelier.com/crs/g\\_reservation.cfm?groupID=857652&hotelID=15259](https://reservations.ihotelier.com/crs/g_reservation.cfm?groupID=857652&hotelID=15259) from March 26-May 22, 2013. Deadline for housing requests is May 22, 2013. Complimentary parking is available at the hotel with in and out privileges.

Convention information and forms may also be found on the VFW website at [www.vfwny.com](http://www.vfwny.com) and the Ladies Auxiliary website at [www.lavfwny.com](http://www.lavfwny.com)

Hospitality and Suite Reservations must be sent to Nick Frederes and are due before May 22, 2013. Hospitality and Suite Reservations will be determined on a “first come-first serve” basis.

**MAIL TO: Nick Frederes, 3657 Harris Hill Road, Falconer, NY 14733**  
**Phone: 716-665-4383 or Email: [nick.frederes@gmail.com](mailto:nick.frederes@gmail.com)**

**DO NOT CALL THE HOTEL FOR HOSPITALITY ROOMS**

Hospitality and Suite Reservation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Circle one:    VFW    AUX  
County: \_\_\_\_\_  
District: \_\_\_\_\_  
Post #: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Arrival Date & Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Tax-Exempt Forms:** A 13.75% sales/occupancy tax will be assessed to all rooms unless properly completed ST119.1 and ST119.5 forms are presented at time of check-in.

If you need more information, please contact:  
**VFW: Dan McMahon 716-773-9376 or [dbm021@yahoo.com](mailto:dbm021@yahoo.com)**  
**AUX: Kathy Macris 716-632-1564 or [kemacris@verizon.net](mailto:kemacris@verizon.net)**  
**Hospitality/Suites: Nick Frederes 716-665-4383 or [nick.frederes@gmail.com](mailto:nick.frederes@gmail.com)**

**94th Department of New  
York Veterans of  
Foreign Wars  
88th Department of New  
York Ladies Auxiliary  
REGULAR BOOSTER SHEET**

(\$1.00 per Name)  
**94th Annual State Convention  
Buffalo, New York**

*(Please print or type)*

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Post/Auxiliary No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
County Council: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to:  
Marlene Roll,  
13492 Henskee Road,  
Alden, NY 14004

**94th Department of New York Veterans of Foreign Wars  
88th Department of New York Ladies Auxiliary  
State Convention • Buffalo, New York**

**Department of New York – Testimonial Dinner  
Thursday, June 13, 2013**

**HONORING  
Commander James Durkin  
and  
President Robin Giles**

**Adam’s Mark Hotel & Conference Center  
Grand Ballroom  
120 Church Street, Buffalo, NY 14202**

**Cocktails: 6:00-7:00 p.m. (CASH BAR)  
Dinner: 7:00 PM  
\$38 per person**

**MEAL CHOICES:**

*Stuffed Chicken with Ricotta,  
Spinach & Artichokes with a  
Rosemary Crème Sauce*

*Flank Steak with a Merlot Demi Glaze*

*Flounder Meuniere*

**All of the above selections served with:  
*Salad with Assorted Rolls, Rice, Mixed Vegetables and Dessert***

**Reservations must be received by May 22, 2013  
NO EXCEPTIONS.  
Table reservations for groups of 8 only.**

POST/AUX	CC	DIST	NAME	ADDRESS

Number of Stuffed Chicken Dinner Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$38 each \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL  
 Number of Flank Steak Dinner Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$38 each \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL  
 Number of Flounder Dinner Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$38 each \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL  
**CHECK NO. \_\_\_\_\_ GRAND TOTAL**

**MAIL TO:  
Roy & Terry Bonham, 546 County Road 18, Wellsville, NY 14895  
Phone: 585-593-3371  
Make checks payable to: 2013 Annual VFW Convention Corp.**

## Bedore Tours

### The Spirit of Adventure!

#### Sightseeing • Group Tours • Charters

## 94th Annual VFW State Convention Committee Corp. Tour Options

**TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2013****Casino & Niagara Falls Illumination Tour****4:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.****\$30.00 per person**

Vehicles to pick up group at Adam's Mark hotel and travel to Niagara Falls, New York. Enjoy 3 hours at Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel with over 2,500 slot machines, gaming tables, poker, Keno.

Restaurants on site include: Thunder Falls Buffet, Three Sisters Cafe, Morrie's Express, Blues Burger Bar, Western Door Steak House, Koi, Noodle Bar at Koi, La Cascata, Tim Hortons, Cold Stone Creamery Travel to the Nation's Oldest State Park! At 9:00 p.m. see the Falls illuminated and depart for Buffalo.

- Trip does not meet the qualification to receive any Casino incentives
- Must be 21 years or older to enter the Gaming Floor
- Valid Federal or State Government Issues Photo ID Required
- Pricing is based on 35 passenger minimum per vehicle

**Grand Lady Dinner Boat Cruise****6:15 p.m.-10:15 p.m.****\$85.00 per person**

Vehicle to pick up group at Adam's Mark hotel and depart for the Niagara River for boarding. Enjoy a 3-hour dinner/cruise along the Niagara River aboard the Grand Lady – enjoy a scenic view of the greater Niagara region and its historical, ecological, commercial and residential areas.

Dinner includes chef's double entrée: Char-grilled sirloin filet served with a boneless chicken breast stuffed with sausage stuffing topped with garlic cream sauce. All dinner entrees served with salad, rolls and butter, Chef's choice of potato and vegetable, dessert, regular/decaf coffee or tea. (Vegetarian meal available upon request in advance.)

- Pricing is based on 35 passenger minimum; maximum of 95 people

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2013****Niagara Falls All American Tour****Morning Tour: 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.****Afternoon Tour: 2:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.****\$69.00 per person**

Vehicle to pick up group at Adam's Mark hotel and travel to Niagara Falls, New York with licensed guide and travel to Niagara Falls and see the Falls from a historic perspective – the Nation's Oldest State Park!

Visit Goat Island, Luna Island for spectacular views of the American and Bridal Veil Falls, Terrapin Point.

Ride the World famous boat *Maid of the Mist* and see the NYS Observation Tower with time to shop at Three Sister's Trading Post.

- Pricing is based on 35 passenger minimum

**Buffalo Naval & Military Park/Made in America Store****Morning Tour: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.****Afternoon Tour: 1:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.****\$50.00 per person**

Vehicle to pick up group at Adam's Mark hotel and visit the nationally known one-of-a kind *Made in America* store – all items sold here must be 100% American made, packaged and shipped – keeping jobs in America. Here you will find over 2,000 items that are produced in America.

Enjoy a guided tour of Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park – home of the *USS The Sullivans, The Croaker, USS Little Rock*. Time will be allowed to walk the Veteran park and view the memorials and time to remember the fallen from the various wars.

- Pricing is based on 35 passenger minimum

**Niagara Wine Trail Tour****2:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.****\$65.00 per person**

Visit Freedom Run Winery – taste fine wines created from vinifera, hybrid and native grapes from the Niagara Escarpment Region.

Arrive at Black Willow Winery – family-owned boutique winery provides

distinctive, rich artisan wines

Tasting at Marjim Manor – featuring fruit wine and receive a souvenir glass; this winery has been a home, a grainery and a convent – hear the history and learn about the ghosts that still reside there.

Enjoy wine and beer tastings at Vizcarra Vineyards – and don't forget to visit Becker Farms for homemade pies, fudge and more

- Wineries subject to change, wineries are dependent on availability and size of vehicle at time of booking
- Pricing is based on 35 passenger minimum

**SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2013****Buffalo Naval & Military Park/Made in America Store****2:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.****\$50.00 per person**

Vehicle to pick up group at Adam's Mark hotel and visit the nationally known one-of-a kind *Made in America* store – all items sold here must be 100% American made, packaged and shipped – keeping jobs in America. Here you will find over 2,000 items that are produced in America.

Enjoy a guided tour of Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park – home of the *USS The Sullivans, The Croaker, USS Little Rock*. Time will be allowed to walk the Veteran park and view the memorials and time to remember the fallen from the various wars.

- Pricing is based on 35 passenger minimum

**Casino & Niagara Falls Illumination Tour****4:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.****\$30.00 per person**

Vehicles to pick up group at Adam's Mark hotel and travel to Niagara Falls, New York. Enjoy 3 hours at Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel with over 2,500 slot machines, gaming tables, poker, Keno.

Restaurants on site include: Thunder Falls Buffet, Three Sisters Cafe, Morrie's Express, Blues Burger Bar, Western Door Steak House, Koi, Noodle Bar at Koi, La Cascata, Tim Hortons, Cold Stone Creamery Travel to the Nation's Oldest State Park! At 9:00 p.m. see the Falls illuminated and depart for Buffalo.

- Trip does not meet the qualification to receive any Casino incentives
- Must be 21 years or older to enter the Gaming Floor
- Valid Federal or State Government Issues Photo ID Required
- Pricing is based on 35 passenger minimum per vehicle

**Any questions, please contact****Jennifer Deitzer at****800-538-8433 or****jenniferdeitzer@bedoretours.com****Mail completed registration form and payment to:****Bedore Tours, Inc.****2968 Niagara Falls Blvd.****North Tonawanda, NY 14120****Make Checks Payable to: Bedore Tours, Inc.**

- Signing up for tours with maximum requirement per day will be assigned based on the order the reservations are received
- Confirmations, updates and cancellations will be notified via e-mail
- We do not reserve seats on vehicles
- Please fill out Reservation Form and send along with payment (Make check payable to: Bedore Tours, Inc.)
- Please call 800-538-8433 if special needs are required
- Deadline for pre-registration: May 1, 2013
- If tour is cancelled due to lack of participation, choice to attend another tour or will be refunded
- Payment is non-refundable after May 1, 2013; no shows are non-refundable (cancellation prior to May 1, 2013 will be charged a \$10.00 processing fee).

*(Registration form on next page)*

**94th Annual VFW State Convention  
Committee Corp.  
Registration Form**

(Please print clearly)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**TOUR OPTIONS:**

(Registration deadline is May 1, 2013)

\*\*\*All Tours will depart from the Adam's Mark Hotel \*\*\*

**Tuesday, June 11, 2013**

Casino and Niagara Falls Illumination Tour	4:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.	\$30.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____
Grand Lady Dinner Boat Cruise	6:15 p.m.-10:15 p.m.	\$85.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____

**Wednesday, June 12, 2013**

Niagara Falls All American Tour	8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	\$69.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____
Buffalo Naval Park Tour	8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	\$50.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____
Niagara Wine Trail Tour	2:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	\$65.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____
Buffalo Naval Park Tour	1:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.	\$50.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____
Niagara Falls All American Tour	2:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	\$69.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____

**Saturday, June 15, 2013**

Buffalo Naval Park Tour	2:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	\$50.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____
Casino and Niagara Falls Illumination Tour	4:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.	\$30.00 per person	No. of People: _____	Total \$ _____

- Minimum of 35 people per vehicle are required to operate each tour; seats are not assigned (If tour is cancelled due to lack of response, complete refund will be given)
- Tour confirmations and updates or cancellations will be communicated via e-mail
- Payment is non-refundable after May 1, 2013 (if cancelled prior to May 1, 2013 there will be a \$10.00 Processing Fee)

**Please mail registration form and payment to:**

Bedore Tours, Inc., 2968 Niagara Falls Blvd., North Tonawanda, NY 14120

\*\*Make checks payable to: Bedore Tours, Inc.

Any Questions, please contact

**Jennifer Deitzer at [jenniferdeitzer@bedoretours.com](mailto:jenniferdeitzer@bedoretours.com) or 800-538-8433**

**Credit Card Charge Authorization Form**

*This is authorization for Bedore Tours to charge:*

Please Circle One:    **VISA**    **MASTERCARD**    **DISCOVER**    **AMERICAN EXPRESS**

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ 3 digit code: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Cardholder (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Cardholder: \_\_\_\_\_

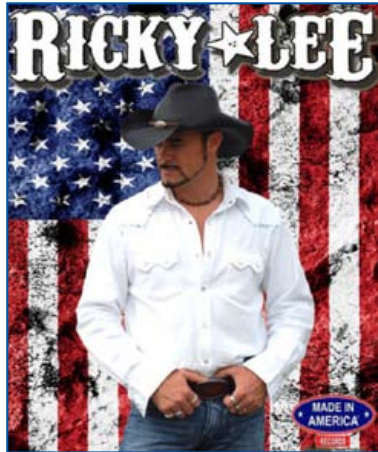
**94th Annual VFW Convention Corp.**  
**presents**  
**VFW's Favorite Performing Artist**  
**"RICKY LEE"**  
**FLAG DAY**  
**PATRIOTIC CONCERT**

Adam's Mark  
Event Center

Friday, June 14, 2013  
• 7:00 P.M.

Ricky will be performing all his top hits and patriotic favorites.

*Don't miss out on this great night of entertainment.*



Admission: \$10.00 per person •  
Cash Bar will be available.

*Reservation Deadline:*  
May 22, 2013

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Wounded Warrior Project.

For Info, call: Rose Cooper at 716-839-1282 or  
Butch Clarkson at 716-289-5953

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Post/Aux # \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_

# Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10 each = \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: "94th Annual VFW State Convention Corp."

Mail to:  
Debbie Fucina  
980 Beach Road  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

**94th Department of NY**  
**Veterans of Foreign Wars**  
**88th Department of NY**  
**Ladies Auxiliary**  
**State Convention • Buffalo, New York**  
**June 12-16, 2013**

2013 Department Souvenirs Pre-Order Form  
Commemorative State Convention Pin



Pins are Red, White and Blue (approximately 5/8" in size)

No. of Single Pins: \_\_\_\_\_ at \$3.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

No. of Sets of 2 Pins: \_\_\_\_\_ at \$5.00 per set = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Commemorative State Convention Glass  
*(Similar Logo as Pin -Etched on one side of the Glass)*

No. of Single Glasses: \_\_\_\_\_ at \$6.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

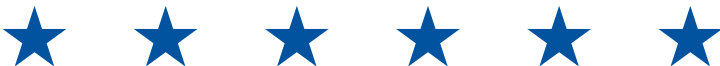
No. of Sets of 2 Glasses: \_\_\_\_\_ at \$11.00 per set = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:  
"2013 Annual VFW State Convention Corp."

Orders must be received by May 22, 2013  
(No Exceptions)

All orders will be available for pickup at  
Convention Registration

Mail to:  
Edward Sitek  
186 Aurora Street  
Lancaster, NY 14086



## Hicksville Veterans of Foreign Wars Holds Voice of Democracy Awards

On Monday evening, February 25, 2013, the Hicksville Veterans of Foreign Wars, William M. Gouse, Jr. Post 3211 held their annual Voice of Democracy Awards. The Voice of Democracy Awards are open to all students attending Hicksville High School, Holy Trinity High School and the Hicksville Middle School. Voice of Democracy Tape and Essay Awards were presented to the top three entrees submitted by students attending Holy Trinity High School and Hicksville High School.

This year's theme was "Is Our Constitution Still Relevant?" Patriot's Pen Awards were presented to the top three entries submitted by students attending the Hicksville Middle School. Their theme was "What Would I Tell America's Founding Fathers?" The winners had the opportunity to read their essays to the audience. Kimberly Nicolas, the winner from Holy Trinity High School, also won 1st Place in the VFW County and VFW District #1 contests.

This is the first time that the Hicksville VFW has ever had a student achieve such a high ranking. This year's award ceremonies had the largest audience in recent memory, including the student's family and friends, teachers from the three schools, County and Town of Oyster Bay elected officials (including a representative from 3rd District Congressman Steve Israel) and Officers and members of the Hicksville VFW and Ladies Auxiliary. The Officers and members of the Hicksville VFW, once again, congratulate this year's winners and look forward to another successful contest next year.



*Pictured here are our winners, seated, L-R: Students from Holy Trinity High School – 1st Place Kimberly Nicolas, 2nd Place Kathleen Horan and 3rd Place Adrina Rodriguez. From Hicksville Middle School – 1st Place Daniel Sullivan, 2nd Place Lovepreet Kaur and 3rd Place Shana Mathew. From Hicksville High School – 1st Place Denny Wang, 2nd Place Laura Oliva and 3rd Place Resala Samadi. Also pictured 6th from left (standing) is this year's Hicksville VFW Voice of Democracy Chairman Roger Doon.*



## Hicksville Post 3211 Holiday Party

On Saturday, December 8, 2012, the Hicksville Veterans of Foreign Wars, William M. Gouse, Jr. Post 3211 hosted a Christmas/Holiday Party for the family members of the 333rd Military Police Brigade. Over 100 spouses, children and/or family members attended.

Members of the Unit were deployed to Afghanistan in August of 2012 and probably will not be returning until mid-2013. The Hicksville VFW has been supporting the Unit and their families since 2004.

Through the efforts of the Unit's Family Readiness Coordinator Jackie Weingartner (whose husband is one of the soldiers deployed), 333rd MP Brigade's Headquarters acting First Sgt. Angela Green, the Hicksville VFW members and the VFW MAP, the event became a reality for the families. Funds made available from the VFW MAP enabled Post 3211 to furnish food for all the attendees. It began at approximately 10:00 a.m. with the families arriving to a festive decorated Post where they were greeted by the VFW members who volunteered their time to be part of the event. Their mission was to make the day as enjoyable as possible for the families under the circumstances. After everyone arrived,



*Children at the arts and crafts table.*



*Family members seeing and speaking to their loved ones in Afghanistan.*

*HICKSVILLE HOLIDAY PARTY, continued from page 14*

a SKYPE was set up, utilizing the hall's large overhead projector screen, so that the families could see and speak to their loved ones in Afghanistan. "Watching many of the children speak to their mother or father was quite an emotional and heartwarming experience," said Hicksville VFW Commander William Walden. "All we had in Vietnam, and during WWII and Korea, were pens, pencils, paper, a free envelope or a one hour line at a phone...if you could find one," he also stated. When the SKYPE time was over, the children kept busy



*Family members enjoying the party.*

at the arts and crafts tables that were set up for them or played and danced to the holiday music.

A large food buffet was furnished and served by the VFW members. After everyone ate, the children were visited by Santa Claus who had a present for each and every child. The event lasted well into the afternoon. The members of the Hicksville VFW were honored to spend the day with these wonderful families. We all look forward to their safe return in 2013. Please keep them in your prayers.



*Hicksville VFW members preparing to serve the food, including William Bozzello (pictured in center), the grandson of Hicksville VFW Commander William Walden.*

## HELP VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR!

Become a VFW Partner in Patriotism, and you'll be providing the backbone of support for VFW's programs that are saving veterans, service members and their families every day.

Your monthly donation right now will help disabled veterans cut through bureaucratic tape to get their VA benefits, help returning troops transition to civilian life and help military families who can't make ends meet. **Learn more** about what your gift delivers.

### Why Give Monthly?

- The most efficient way to support America's veterans
- Stretches your donation further by keeping costs down
- Provides "at the ready" funds to handle emergencies and growing program needs

Your Monthly donation goes directly to Dept. of New York

Sign up today....

[http://heroes.vfw.org/site/PageNavigator/Grassroots/Grassroots\\_Main\\_Page](http://heroes.vfw.org/site/PageNavigator/Grassroots/Grassroots_Main_Page)

Select Monthly Giving from the list on the right.



*Become a VFW Partner in Patriotism and get this FREE Patriotic Tote Bag honoring your steadfast commitment to veterans.*

## Tuition and Fee Schedule Effective January 1, 2013 – June 30, 2013

### Excelsior College – Master’s Programs Partner Pricing

Services	Partnership Rates	Standard Rates	Purpose
Application	\$100	\$100	Processing of application and establishment of student record. The fee is waived for Excelsior alumni.
Tuition (per credit)	\$435	\$515	Participation in academic coursework.
Graduate Student Services Annual Fee (paid on an annual basis with the first annual fee charged at enrollment)	\$265	\$265	Library services, academic advising and academic program planning.
Graduation Fee	\$130	\$130	Final review and processing of (one time) student files for conferring of degree and issuance of diploma.

**The partner pricing pilot for the master’s programs will be effective January 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013.**

Located at 7 Columbia Circle • Albany, New York 12203 • 518-464-8500. Excelsior College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools • 3624 Market Street • Philadelphia, PA 19104 • 215-662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Excelsior College admits students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin. Excelsior College is a Title IV eligible educational institution (Federal Code #014251) offering Federal Financial Assistance (Pell Grants, the FSEOG program, Stafford Loans, and PLUS Loans) to students who qualify and are enrolled in course-based programs.

Excelsior College is registered as a private institution with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education pursuant to sections 136A.61 to 136A.71. Registration is not an endorsement of the institution. Credits earned at the institution may not transfer to all other institutions.

#### Graduate-Level Program Information

##### Excelsior College

Excelsior College is a private, nonprofit, regionally accredited, distance-learning institution that has been recognized as a leader in removing obstacles to the educational goals of adult learners. Excelsior College offers high-quality, and reasonably priced educational opportunities that give learners the flexibility they need to complete a degree while managing work, family and other obligations. In addition to offering undergraduate (associate and bachelor’s) degrees and certificate programs in select subject areas,

Excelsior College offers master’s degrees in business, criminal justice, cybersecurity, liberal arts, and nursing. For more information on our master’s degree programs, please visit [www.excelsior.edu/programs](http://www.excelsior.edu/programs)

##### Do I qualify to receive partnership pricing?

To receive the partnership pricing for an Excelsior College program, you must be a member or employee of one of Excelsior’s academic partners or a member, employee, or spouse or domestic partner of one of Excelsior’s veteran partners. For a complete listing of Excelsior’s veteran partners, visit <http://www.excelsior.edu/welcome-veterans>

##### How do I make sure I receive partnership pricing?

In order to receive partnership pricing, be sure to inform an Excelsior College military admissions counselor of your status with an approved partner and indicate the partnership when you apply for admission.

##### How do I become an Excelsior College student?

There is a two-step process to becoming a student. The first step is to apply for admission. This process begins after your application, application fee, and official transcript(s) have been received. You will be notified when the application process has been completed (typically within two weeks of receipt of all materials). Once admitted, you will receive a report that shows the remaining credits you need to complete your degree program, as well as an enrollment package. Then you may move forward with the second step, which is to enroll (matriculate).

##### What is the deadline for applications?

There is no application deadline. Excelsior College accepts applications throughout the year; however, a processed application will expire a year from the date it was completed.

##### How soon can I start after I apply?

You may enroll (matriculate) as soon as the application process



TUITION AND FEE SCHEDULE, continued from page 16

has been completed and you have been admitted. Enrollments are typically processed within 24-48 hours of receipt. After enrollment, academic advisors will be able to answer your questions, assist you with course selection, and provide you with course approval. You will be able to register for the next available course term as soon as you are ready!

#### How many of my previously-earned credits will transfer?

Excelsior is known for its generous transfer of credit policy and accepts credits from regionally accredited institutions. A review and evaluation of your previously-earned credits will be conducted after your application for admission is accepted. The number of credits accepted will vary based on graduate program selected and type of credits submitted for transfer.

#### Where can I get more details on how to apply and enroll?

For detailed information, visit the Excelsior Partnership Web page at <http://www.excelsior.edu/welcome-veterans> or send an email inquiry to [veterans@excelsior.edu](mailto:veterans@excelsior.edu) or call 800-647-2388, ext. 1352.

#### What type of financial aid is available for graduate-level programs?

For information about the financial aid options and VA education benefits that are available for graduate-level programs, contact [VAFA@excelsior.edu](mailto:VAFA@excelsior.edu)

Excelsior College: 7 Columbia Circle, Albany, NY 12203

Phone: (888) 647-2388, ext. 1352

EMAIL: [veterans@excelsior.edu](mailto:veterans@excelsior.edu) | <http://www.excelsior.edu/welcome-veterans> | [www.excelsior.edu](http://www.excelsior.edu)

## Excelsior College Offers Graduate/Master Degrees At a Discount!



Excelsior College is now offering a 15% discount on tuition to New York VFW employees, members and their spouses or domestic partners for graduate level degrees. Until now, the education partnership included only associate and bachelor degrees providing both tuition and fee discounts. For potential students, this means access to several graduate level degree paths, including MBA, with eight concentration

options, newly-launched Master of Science in Cybersecurity, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, Master of Science in Criminal Justice, as well as Master of Science in nursing programs.

“Veterans entering the job market are doing so during difficult economic times and are increasingly seeking ways to distinguish themselves in a tough labor market,” said Judy Reed, director of veteran services and outreach for Excelsior College’s Center for Military Education. “A degree is the best way to do that and extending this reduced tuition rate through our graduate programs will allow veterans to earn an advanced degree giving themselves an edge in the job market.”

For more information on the education partnership with New York VFW, go to: <http://www.excelsior.edu/nyvfw> or contact Judy Reed at [jreed@excelsior.edu](mailto:jreed@excelsior.edu) or call 518-464-8678 for assistance.

## Is Online Learning Right for You?

By Alicia Jacobs, Excelsior Life News Staff

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 38 percent of students who enrolled in higher education are over 25 years of age. Many must balance school with working full-time and raising a family. Life is different for these adult students.

But is online learning for everyone? And how does a student determine if it is a good fit for them?

“There are three key benefits to distance learning: flexibility, convenience and accessibility,” says Excelsior College academic advisor Chris Normile. “Students can utilize learning tools and participate in class discussions while focusing on their studies when their schedules permit.”

Jacqueline McPhillips, a former Excelsior academic advisor who now works for enrollment management, offered caution. “With this flexibility comes responsibility,” says McPhillips. “It is important for online learners to set aside time for themselves to read, respond to discussions and complete their assignments. Online learning requires a much more self-disciplined approach than the traditional classroom setting.”

Excelsior Life sat down with Normile, McPhillips and admissions counselor, Bill Nettleton to discuss the differences between online and traditional campus-based learning, the characteristics of successful online students and the importance of managing expectations.

**Excelsior Life:** What are characteristics of a successful online/distance learning student?

**McPhillips:** Self-motivation, an enthusiasm for learning and determination.

**Nettleton:** Being a self starter, managing time well and enjoying self study.

**Normile:** Students should be more self-reliant. While online instructors tend to do a good job providing feedback to students, collaborating with one’s peers can be challenging due to scheduling conflicts.

**Excelsior Life:** What should students consider before enrolling in distance learning?

**Nettleton:** Students should consider exactly why they are pursuing a degree and what they hope to get out of it. After determining they are enrolling for the right reasons, the next question becomes how much time they have to commit to their studies each week and how they will be paying for their education.

**Normile:** Prior to enrolling in a distance learning program students should ask: Am I comfortable using computers and navigating the Internet? Am I an independent learner that will be self-motivated to follow instructions, utilize resources available to me and manage my time effectively?

**McPhillips:** Most of our students balance family, work and their education, and it is often just a matter of having a plan at the outset. Decisions should be made with their families while also thinking about job responsibilities.

**Excelsior Life:** What are the most frequently asked questions about distance learning in a higher education environment?

**McPhillips:** Students often ask what they can expect. They seem

IS ONLINE LEARNING RIGHT FOR YOU?, continued on page 18

IS ONLINE LEARNING RIGHT FOR YOU?, continued from page 17

to worry about being completely on their own.

**Nettleton:** The top questions are: How many of my previous credits will transfer? How long will it take? How much will it cost?

**Normile:** The questions often include does my program require a lot of group work? How quickly can I complete my program?

**Excelsior Life:** Can a student “test the waters” before enrolling?

**Nettleton:** Absolutely. Excelsior offers two ways of earning credit, online courses or credit by examination. Students can take either of these as non-matriculated student. So if a student wants to take an online course or study and test out of a subject through an examination, they can do that before they are enrolled to get a sense if distance learning is the right option for them.

**McPhillips:** I usually suggest beginning slowly if students are coming back to school after a long hiatus, starting with one course to re-adapt to an academic setting. Additionally, this allows the student to gauge how much time they would need to dedicate to a course. Students often find that they can move through their studies more quickly, or some find that one 8-week course at a time is enough for them.

**Normile:** Students should consider taking one course as a non-matriculated student to familiarize themselves with the online learning environment and course experience.

**Excelsior Life:** What resources does Excelsior College offer to individuals thinking about becoming a student?

**Nettleton:** We have a very comprehensive and informative website that outlines all of the programs we offer, as well as a listing of all the courses and exams available through Excelsior. All prospective students can also speak with an Admissions Counselor to discuss their degree options and to answer any questions they have before applying or enrolling.

**McPhillips:** When students apply to Excelsior College, they benefit from an unofficial review of their credit to get a clear picture of how much coursework they would need to complete to achieve their goal. Community college students coming from partner institutions have transfer advisors. They are also given a key contact at Excelsior College to assist with the transferring process.

**Normile:** Prospective students can speak with an Admissions Counselor for a free consultation and Financial Aid Representative. Once enrolled into a degree program, a student is assigned an Academic Advisor for support related to the student’s degree program.

If you are a veteran, employee or their spouse or domestic partner attending or thinking of attending Excelsior College, the college has education partnerships with the Department of NY, VFW which provides reduced tuition and fees for associate and bachelor degrees to members and their spouses or domestic partners as well as a 15% discount on graduate degrees. For more information on the veteran partnerships, go to: <http://www.excelsior.edu/nyvfw> or contact Judy Reed at [jreed@excelsior.edu](mailto:jreed@excelsior.edu) or call 518-464-8678 for assistance.



## Veteran Scams

### Giving Out Information

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is warning veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information.

The latest scam – currently centered in the Midwest – comes from callers who identify themselves as working for the “Patient Care Group.” They say VA recently changed their procedure for dispensing prescriptions and ask for the veteran’s credit card number.

According to James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, “The VA has not changed its processes for dispensing prescription medications.” He adds that “The VA does not call veterans and ask them to disclose personal information over the phone.”

### False Providers

An organization called Veterans Affairs Services (VAS) is providing benefit and general information on VA and gathering personal information on veterans. This organization is *not* affiliated with VA in any way. Websites with the name “vaservices” immediately after the “www” are not part of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Veterans are warned *not* to visit the sites, or to share any information concerning themselves or data on other veterans.

VA *does not* randomly call veterans, nor does it ask veterans for information which it does not already have, such as Social Security numbers. If you have not dealt with the VA previously and in person – and all of a sudden, you receive a call from someone saying they are with the VA or something similar sounding – hang up the phone. Also, do not respond to emails which suggest that they are from VA, which never conducts official business nor asks for personal information by e-mail.

VAS may be gaining access to military personnel through their close resemblance to the VA name and seal. VA’s legal counsel has requested that the department coordinate with the Department of Defence to inform military installations, particularly mobilization sites, of this group and their lack of affiliation or endorsement by VA to provide any services.

In addition, VA’s general counsel is requesting that anyone who has examples of VAS acts that violate Chapter 59 of Title 38, U.S. Code, such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits, please pass any additional information to Michael G. Daugherty, Staff Attorney, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of General Counsel (022G2), 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

### Scam Targets Washington Veterans

**AARP Website 01/2013** – A scam targeting veterans is picking up steam in Washington State. According to a group of consumer and veterans’ advocates dubbed the Aid & Attendance Project (A&AP), organizations with patriotic names but questionable aims are springing up all across the state.

These so-called patriotic financial advisors are offering to help veterans and/or their widows become eligible for Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) pensions and related programs such as Aid and Attendance. They promise to do so by repositioning a claimant’s assets, making the veteran appear to be impoverished and eligible for VA benefits. But the financial products and advice they’re hawking do little more than scramble the veterans’ financial worth and nest egg, while lining the advisors’ pockets with lucrative commissions.

In addition to purchasing financial instruments that are frequently

*VETERAN SCAMS, continued from page 18*

not in their best interests, repositioning or hiding assets can often lead to trouble when veterans later consider applying for Medicaid benefits. Unlike the VA, Medicaid has a look-back period of 5 years and can impose a penalty or deny benefits after the transfer of assets through means such as gifting, trusts or the purchase of irrevocable annuities.

As if that wasn't enough trouble, remember that the VA considers its pension program and its higher-level benefit of Aid and Attendance to be a need-based program for wartime veterans or their widows whose financial worth is \$80,000 or less. As such, the VA considers it fraud if a person repositions or hides their assets to make themselves appear eligible for a program that was not intended for them. As a result, the veteran/widow can be left with significant legal issues.

According to the A&AP, these organizations also give out false information, suggesting they can speed things up with the VA process. But by its very nature, using the services of these organizations will prolong the claim, and in too many cases, the claim isn't even filed.

To help combat this problem, accredited veteran service officers and members of A&AP in Washington State are reaching out to adult care facilities, veterans, and widows with information about the real benefits of these programs and the eligibility requirements. Unfortunately, they have described finding senior citizens on the verge of eviction from their homes when their promised benefits did not materialize in time. In several cases, seniors were billed for legal fees, which usually turned up after the veteran/widow did not purchase any products. If you had any problems like this, email the A&AP at [VeteranFraud@gmail.com](mailto:VeteranFraud@gmail.com).

For more information or questions, call the VA hotline at 877-294-6380 or contact a national veteran service organization. The VA has an online application which is relatively easy to access, and you can contact the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs or the VFW directly for help. And best of all, remember their services are free.

### **Taking Aim at Old Soldiers**

#### *Seminars target vets with unwise investments*

At community centers, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, their spiel to older veterans goes something like this: We can get you instant eligibility for additional benefits through a quick overhaul of your investments. These self-described "veterans advocates" are in fact unscrupulous investment advisers.

"They say that if you purchase financial products through us, we'll make you eligible" for Department of Veterans Affairs pensions and

other benefits, says Joe Foster, administrator of Montana's Veteran Affairs Division, which recently helped form a task force to combat this growing scam against vets.

The usual pitch involves getting a veteran to transfer retirement assets into an irrevocable trust so that the family appears to be impoverished. This helps it meet eligibility requirements for a VA pension and related programs such as Aid and Attendance, which pays an additional benefit to veterans who need assistance with everyday living.

As the salesmen explain it, the VA doesn't "look back" to examine veterans' asset histories in determining eligibility for a pension.

Although it's true that the VA doesn't examine why you may be a millionaire one day and appear poverty-stricken the next, "Medicaid does look back," Foster says. "And when they see you've transferred your assets in this manner, it could jeopardize your eligibility for those benefits."

### **Scrambled Nest Egg**

The bigger concern is that the new trust usually contains annuities, long-term investments that are often considered inappropriate for older retirees. Some annuities must be held for a decade or longer before they pay out a monthly income.

Nevertheless, they are recommended by unscrupulous salesmen because they generate high sales commissions. A \$500,000 annuity, for instance, could yield the agent \$75,000 for just a few hours of work, says Neil Granger, a California consultant on investment scams and financial abuse of older people.

Other investments pitched by these salesmen at "free lunch" seminars are completely bogus. They just take the money and run.

### **Protection Detection**

If you're a vet, here's what else you should know:

- **Don't be fooled by official-sounding names.** Some sales agents operate as, or work with, "front" organizations, falsely claiming they have a veteran affiliation and nonprofit status.
- **Don't depend on nursing homes, community centers and assisted living facilities to protect you.** They may be unaware of the shady nature of the seminars. Often they are paid a fee to let volunteers give presentations.
- **Get credible information on how to qualify for veterans benefits by contacting your State Veterans affairs agency at [nasdva.net](http://nasdva.net)**

Before investing, check the agent's record at your state regulatory office. For a list, visit [www.nasaa.org/about-us/contact-us/contact-your-regulator/](http://www.nasaa.org/about-us/contact-us/contact-your-regulator/)

## **The VA Won't Turn Vets In!**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs issued a statement declaring it will not comply with New York State's new SAFE Act requiring mental health providers to report potentially dangerous individuals to state authorities.

The New York State gun-control law (Safe Act) calls on doctors and mental health to alert officials about patients they feel are more likely to cause serious injury or harm to themselves or others.

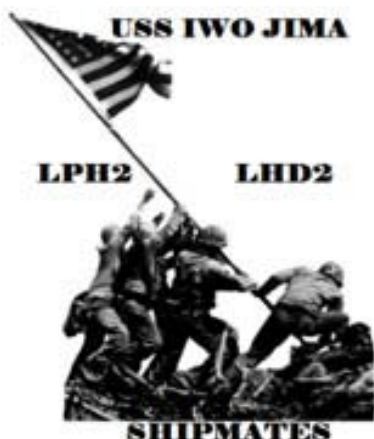
When notified of individuals that fit such a description, state officials will check the names against a state database of licensed gun owners. When a name matches, local law enforcement will confiscate any guns said individual(s) have if they won't voluntarily surrender them.

Mark Ballesteros from the Department of Veterans Affairs said his agency will follow federal law, not New York State laws.



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## Hot Shots

OV Editor's Points to Ponder

A letter delivered to a multitude of veterans recently levels what amounts to a devastating threat to veterans' freedoms and even their right to manage their own affairs. Here's a clip from the letter:

*"We propose to rate you incompetent for VA purposes. This means we must decide if you are able to handle your VA benefit payments. We will base our decision on all the evidence we already have including any other evidence you sent to us."*

So here we are, face-to-face with Goliath and we don't even have a stone to sling at the monster. Are we doomed to complete dependence if something isn't done soon? That amounts to the complete loss of independence and freedoms; in effect the government can confiscate all or part of your benefits. What are we to do? The options are few and the obstacles are many as fear threatens to consume us.

In fact, Executive Director of the United States Justice Foundation, (which defends civil and religious rights) Michael Connelly states; *"In every state in the United States no one can be declared incompetent to administer their own affairs without due process of law and that usually requires a judicial hearing with evidence being offered to prove to a judge that the person is indeed incompetent. Obviously, the Department of Veterans Affairs can't be bothered by such impediments as the Constitution."*

OK, the Constitution says they can't but they are going to anyhow. How can that be and how do we fight something like that? The law is clear but veterans are doomed to lose the very freedoms they fought for and many of their comrades died for because some believe veterans are a danger to society, crazy and totally inept. Why are veterans labeled differently and why are we singled out as the only crazy, gun toting, patriotic fanatic lunatics out there? Well maybe we aren't alone! What if there are others out there as targets of the 'Nanny State', maybe there are some that have no idea what's coming.

Again from Michael Connelly: *"We have to ask who will be next. If you are receiving a Social Security check will you get one of these letters? Will the government declare that you are incompetent because of your age and therefore banned from firearm ownership?"* Connelly's remarks can be read on this link: <http://www.wnd.com/2013/03/va-says-routine-is-to-threaten-vets-gun-rights/>

Senator Diane Feinstein has proposed an even more radical gun grab than Governor Cuomo here in New York, but her allegations that veterans are not capable of rational thought or actions adds to the insanity. She goes even further by declaring every veteran inept, incapable and unpredictable, not just combat veterans but all veterans. Maybe insanity is the wrong word; maybe words like repression or enslavement are more descriptive and accurate.

Feinstein actually states that PTSD is something new. She says; *"The problem with expanding this is that, you know, with the advent of PTSD, which I think is a new phenomenon as a product of the Iraq War."* Really...a new product of the Iraq War? A Senator of the United States thinks PTSD is new and started during the Iraq war. If she doesn't have a grasp of what PTSD is and how long it's been affecting veterans she doesn't deserve the job; she is a disgrace. Her callous disregard and contempt for the veterans of this country proves she has no right to dictate or propose laws limiting

*POT SHOTS, continued from page 20*

or eradicating their freedoms. She was referring to veterans having access and/or possessing weapons assuming we are all going out to kill as many humans as we can because we are so unstable. She's just one more politician that has no problem ignoring the constitution even declaring it out of date and irrelevant, just like veterans.

More and more veterans are losing faith, and no longer trust in those that sent them into harm's way to protect and preserve. After the horrors of war the least the corrupt leaders could do is exactly... the least they will do. The examples given herein are but a drop in the bucket; those that wish us to be their subjects have forsaken their oaths and have lost sight of who serves who.

In the end, it is our responsibility and duty to protect and preserve the freedoms and rights we fought for. But as we face the foe, the task is daunting and we feel so alone. But we are only as alone as we choose to be, only as weak as we think we are and only as defeated as we allow ourselves to be.

Alone we are outnumbered, but united we are a force to be dealt with. We have at our disposal the very strength and power necessary to preserve every right and freedom we've ever had and more. For most of us we have had years of conditioning, training and experience in the art of serving veterans but we fail to take action as our freedoms are whittled away one piece at a time.

The force we own is the VFW but it appears to be growing old and feeble, a ghost of what it once was. At least in the minds of many members it is but there are still some who have hope, vision and the ambition to make things happen. Those few know we are stronger in numbers and they know their numbers must grow.

If as the saying goes, *'united we stand, divided we fall'* we are united in the VFW the strongest war veterans organization in the world but that strength is being zapped in part by divisions in so many of our Posts. Corruptions, thefts, in-fighting, jealousy and power grabs are but a few of the issues causing us tremendous heartache and terrible public relations nightmares and divisions among members. If we can't fight together instead of fighting each other, nothing will be gained and there's everything to lose.

Over the past half dozen years or so I have been involved in various ways in Court Martials, post trusteeships, settling internal post disagreements and squabbles, investigating thefts, abuse and malfeasance just to mention a few situations. In these cases members were fighting members, trying to neuter the Post bully, trying to recover stolen funds or members were destroying their own Posts. In

far too many cases the devastating fights, trials and the subsequent results became public spectacles. All that did more than tarnish the VFW; they slowly ate away at the positive public perception and all of that warps our images, degrades our purpose and makes that new membership pool smaller and smaller.

It takes a strong willed person to join an organization with such problems and a public image that makes today's political shenanigans look inviting. So often the comments from the 'New Heroes' are that the 'Old Guys' have lost it and that has left a subliminal message to stay away from us. Recruiting then becomes a real challenge if not next to impossible and eventually recruiting becomes 'the other guy's responsibility' leaving the toughest job in the VFW to a very few dedicated members and they face a daunting task.

So when the VFW censures politicians' intent on our debasement and enslavement, they snicker and ignore our efforts to change their minds. After all, if we can't maintain our house what effect would our objections and outrage have on theirs? They just await our demise; we are nothing more than a pebble in the road, a nuisance and a bother in their quest for total and complete control of all of society, not just veterans.

As the VFW is slowly plundered and destroyed from within the apathetic and lethargic among us, just watch it happen and wonder why. Assuming the other guy will fix the problem is contagious and eventually everyone has the virus of complacency. So often we yearn for the 'Good Old Days' when there were thousands in our ranks and plenty of backup, help and energy. All too often we ignore or refuse to accept the multitudes of new age veterans coming home from the nation's latest wars. They are too young and inexperienced, too aggressive, too ambitious, too innovative and even worse, available.

As we reject these patriotic, dedicated and promising veterans they decide to start their own organizations ignoring all the established ones. Reinventing the wheel, if you will, zaps their strength and effectiveness against the opposition because they have to concentrate for so long on all the mechanics of the new organization rather than the needs of veterans.

Their time is overdue in the VFW – we need them! Accepting their strengths, new ideas, energy and determination will assure us a position on the front line of the political battles and secure the victories veterans need. Rejecting the new and younger veterans is no longer an option; we must accept and embrace change or expect the worst.





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