



★ MOWW ★

MILITARY ORDER  
OF THE WORLD WARS

# Veteran Affairs Committee

## NEWSLETTER 2023 DECEMBER

**Our goal is to support chapters in their service to Veterans through participation, encouragement, acknowledgements, and eternal honor.**

The Committee chair is Michael Peck, [colpeck@yahoo.com](mailto:colpeck@yahoo.com)

Region representatives are:

Region I, -----: 7 states, 7 chapters

Region III, Paul Farinella, [pffarin50@hotmail.com](mailto:pffarin50@hotmail.com)

Region V, Luis P. Ariff, [L.Ariff21@gmail.com](mailto:L.Ariff21@gmail.com)

Region VII, Clay Le Grande, [c.legrande@cox.net](mailto:c.legrande@cox.net)

Region XIII, Michael J. Halpin, [usmcf4gib@yahoo.com](mailto:usmcf4gib@yahoo.com)

Region II, Eliseo Lopez, [elopez1989@yahoo.com](mailto:elopez1989@yahoo.com)

Region IV, Joel Kramer, [joelkramer@aol.com](mailto:joelkramer@aol.com)

Region VI, Sigredo Perez, [usgrunt11@gmail.com](mailto:usgrunt11@gmail.com)

Region VIII, Don Munson, [don.munson@tx.rr.com](mailto:don.munson@tx.rr.com)

Region XIV, Charles Noble, [craignoble@cox.net](mailto:craignoble@cox.net)

Join us monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 11 am CST - [Link to join by video](#)

Add the year of meetings to your calendar - [Calendar link for Veteran Affairs](#)

## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST VETERANS:

### 2LTs and Ensigns of Active, Guard, and Reserve Service



(PHOTO CREDIT: U.S. ARMY)

**Watch the replay of United States Military Academy (USMA) Branch Night  
Class of 2024**

*held on November 29, 2023*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnAmPlfKKO0>

## WWII Vets Now Get Free Healthcare, VA Says in Rollout of New Programs

As reported November 10 by Patricia Kime for Military Times, all World War II veterans are now eligible for no-cost healthcare, medical services, and nursing home care from the VA, the agency announced in advance of Veterans Day. These veterans, who number fewer than 120,000, according to data published Thursday by the Pew Research Center, will no longer have to make copayments or pay enrollment fees or monthly premiums, regardless of their disability ratings or priority group in the VA health system.

Source: <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/11/10/world-war-ii-veterans-now-get-free-health-care-va-says-holiday-rollout-of-new-programs.html>

## Senators to VA: Stop Needless Foreclosures on Thousands of Veterans

A group of U.S. senators is asking the Department of Veterans Affairs to put an immediate stop to foreclosures on the homes of veterans and service members.

The senators cited an investigation by NPR that found thousands of veterans who took what's called a COVID forbearance — a program that allowed them to defer paying their mortgages and keep their homes during the pandemic — are now at risk of losing their homes through no fault of their own.

"Without this pause, thousands of veterans and servicemembers could needlessly lose their homes," Sens. Sherrod Brown, Jon Tester, Jack Reed and Tim Kaine, all Democrats, wrote in a letter to VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "This was never the intent of Congress."

Source: <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/15/1213219040/senators-to-va-stop-needless-foreclosures-on-thousands-of-veterans>

## Lifetime National Park Pass for Veterans

On Veterans Day 2022, the National Park Service unveiled a lifetime pass providing free entrance to national parks for Veterans and their families. The Interagency Military Lifetime Pass waives entrance fees for the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and standard amenity recreation fees for the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites for current military service members and their dependents, Veterans and Gold Star Families.

Veterans and their families have free access to approximately 2,000 public locations spread out across more than 400 million acres of public lands, which host activities to fit any lifestyle —from serene to high octane, including hiking, fishing, paddling, biking, hunting, stargazing, camping, and much more.

The Military Pass has been expanded to include a pass that does not expire for Veterans and Gold Star Family members. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2022 authorized a free lifetime pass to national parks and other federal recreational lands for eligible Veterans and Gold Star Families. In recent years, they were able to receive annual passes.

Source: <https://www.wkgc.org/2023/11/27/free-lifetime-pass-for-veterans-and-gold-star-families/>



## Perpetrators of pension poaching scams can present themselves in many professions, including attorneys and financial planners.

“Pension Poaching” is a fraudulent scheme that targets Veterans, their families, and survivors who may be potentially eligible for VA benefits. Unscrupulous advisors exploit claimants by artificially qualifying them for VA Pension benefits in exchange for financial gains. They may advise claimants to conceal their assets in trusts or annuity products to circumvent pension rates for veterans and survivors. However, this financial exploitation can lead to disqualification from benefits or result in investments that earn high fees for the advisors. Furthermore, advisors may neglect to mention that the VA reviews any assets transferred in the last three years before filing a pension claim, which could require claimants to repay benefits to the government. Be vigilant and protect yourself against this harmful scam.

Source: <https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/limitedincome/pension-poaching.pdf>

## The Minuteman Campaign

The Minuteman Campaign is a U.S. Army Cadet Command initiative to offer Guaranteed Reserve Forces Duty (GRFD) scholarships to candidates that self-select for service in a Reserve component. The GRFD scholarship provides full tuition and fees or room and board (\$10,000 per year) for up to four years at a public or private school. This program provides well-trained officers to the Reserve Components and improves the total Army force.

Source and Learn More-

<https://www.usar.army.mil/MinutemanCampaign/>



**THE ARMY RESERVE MINUTEMAN SCHOLARSHIP**  
2023-2024 CAMPAIGN

The Minuteman Campaign is a US Cadet Command initiative to offer Guaranteed Reserve Forces Duty (GRFD) Scholarships to candidates that self-select for service in a Reserve Component.

**SCHOLARSHIP OVERVIEW**

- The Minuteman campaign awards 2-, 2.5-, 3-, 3.5-, 4-year scholarships.
- Public, Non-resident or private institution rates authorized.
- They must be academically aligned to start and end the scholarship by graduation date and commission.
- Graduate degrees eligible.
- All scholarships are based on available funding.

**How to Apply:**

- Meet all scholarship qualifications
- Seek a nomination and Interview from one of the following resources:
  - Army Reserve Ambassadors - <https://www.usar.army.mil/FindanAmbassador/>
  - USAR Major Subordinate Command Commander
  - Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army (CASA) <https://www.army.mil/casa#org-find-a-casa>

**BENEFITS**

- Covers full tuition and fees OR room and board (\$10,000 per year)
- Monthly \$420 Cadet stipend (freshmen-senior year)
- Annual \$1,200 book stipend
- Earn E-5 drill pay upon contracting
- Guaranteed commission in the Army Reserve with an eight-year service obligation

**REQUIREMENTS**

Minimum test scores: SAT = 850 or ACT = 19 or GT = 110  
2.5 Cumulative GPA  
Official college/university acceptance letter  
Currently Enlisted or eligible to enlist  
Must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. National  
Meet physical fitness requirements  
Between age of 17-28  
GRFD MM scholarship recipients cannot compete for active duty  
Eligible to participate in the Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP) with an Army Reserve unit

**APPLICATION DEADLINE**  
4 August 2023

More information at [www.usar.army.mil/MinutemanCampaign](https://www.usar.army.mil/MinutemanCampaign)  
Questions? [usarmy.knox.usacc.list.army-reserve-rotc-scholarships@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.knox.usacc.list.army-reserve-rotc-scholarships@army.mil)

## GUARD ACT VS. PLUS ACT: VETERANS SHOULD STUDY DUELING BILLS ON HEALTH CARE

Article by John 'Wolf' Wagner for the Augusta Free Press,  
Published November 2, 2023.

Source: <https://augustafreepress.com/news/guard-act-vs-plus-act-veterans-should-study-congressional-dueling-bills-on-health-care/>

As a Virginia resident and a veteran, I've studied the congressional dueling bills on health care for veterans and highly recommend all those who served in the armed forces do the same.

Of America's roughly 18 million veterans, the latest census data shows over 670,000 in the commonwealth. Since over 5 million nationally receive federal disability benefits from the Veterans Administration (VA), statistically speaking, hundreds of thousands of Virginia veterans will be impacted by what happens through these rival Congressional bills.

As described in a recent article in the Augusta Free Press, the first is called the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding Veterans, or GUARD Act for short. The competitor to GUARD is the Preserving Lawful Utilization of Services, a.k.a. PLUS Act.

GUARD and PLUS were designed to protect veterans from potential scammers. Both have bipartisan support with Democrats and Republicans crossing the aisles together to join opposing camps. Unlike most things in Washington today, this issue isn't political – nor is it left vs. right.

The GUARD Act outright BANS anyone from helping veterans with filing benefits claims unless they are VA-accredited attorneys, under threat of criminal penalties. Meanwhile, the PLUS Act would instead simplify and expand the VA-accreditation process. Both would add needed oversight, set limits to costs to veterans, and require those offering services to be VA-approved.

Based on personal experiences as a former senior official at the VA and retired Army officer – the PLUS Act is more veteran-friendly because it keeps options for help open rather than eliminating them.

PLUS allows countless legitimate veteran-owned small businesses and small to mid-size veteran service organizations (VSOs) to stay in business providing a valuable service to those who receive federal disability benefits and will seek them in the future. With the long term effects on veterans' health stemming from the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, this number is sure to grow.

It's important to note that many Vietnam War veterans who suffered from Agent Orange are still filing claims for benefits to this day, aided by a helpful guide on the VA website. Even though the war ended in the 1970s, many ill-health impacts have worsened over time. If history is a guide, veterans who served in Afghanistan and my fellow colleagues from the war in Iraq will be filing disability claims for decades. The recently passed PACT Act expands health care and benefits for toxic substances so will lead to more veterans filing disability claims. As a nation we should ensure they don't face needless obstacles in their path.

VA has pushed very hard in recent years with the MISSION Act and other initiatives to ensure that veterans have as much choice in their care in support as possible. The PLUS Act continues to allow that type of freedom to veterans, and to ensure that legitimate businesses and individuals can continue to assist in navigating the sometimes-frustrating process to get benefits and assistance through the VA.

We need to ensure that those who do work to benefit veterans are not out to take advantage of them or defraud the government; this is the essence of a new accreditation process via the PLUS Act.

A well-intentioned effort to thwart a handful of potential scammers should not mean that thousands of other veterans must lose their livelihood as they will face prison sentences for continuing to help fellow veterans with benefit claims if the GUARD Act passes.

Some in Congress believe that ONLY the government can provide the help our veterans need. That is definitively not the case everywhere.

Let's not discriminate against honest, hard-working people and companies who work to help our veterans. We should not punish veterans by creating another backlog of government assistance by limiting choice in how they acquire benefits. The VA already has an enormous backlog to review for benefits, so why would we expect anything less if ONLY the VA and VA-accredited attorneys under the current system would be permitted to process disability claims?

While VA reform is much needed, it should not hurt veterans. Though both the GUARD and PLUS Act address an issue that needs to be solved, GUARD is too restrictive and is worse than the status quo. PLUS sets the bar higher in vetting who can help veterans, though doesn't go overboard and outright hinder veterans. It's the better option.

John "Wolf" Wagner is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs, a former Deputy Commissioner at the FDA and a former Senior Advisor to Sec'y Azar at HHS on Operation Warp Speed (COVID response).

### **Legislation Links:**

**[Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits Act \(GUARD\)](#)**

**[Preserving Lawful Utilization of Services \(PLUS\)](#)**

# THE BRIAN CONLEY VETERANS RESILIENCY CENTER



*A photo of the new Veterans Resource Center as the facility was being re-furbished in 2013.*

*The following article appeared in the Delaware Military Heritage and Education Foundation Newsletter "Boots", by MOWW Patriot Teddi Silver from Region III.*

In Middletown, DE there is a building that houses "The Brian Conley Veterans Resiliency Center". Not many people know about it, but the center help's veterans reintegrate into society after they have fulfilled their duty in the military. For some veterans it is easy to transition to civilian life but for others, they might need a helping hand. This is where Warriors Helping Warriors comes in. This organization helps veterans in many ways. It started out when Military Order of the World Wars Companion MAJ Kevin Conley saw that the veterans were having difficulty dealing with the VA and guidance was needed to navigate the "system". Kevin, along with his mother, Marsha and father, Companion Bill Conley, founded Warriors Helping Warriors established their services to include: temporary housing, housing for homeless veterans, education, financial planning, peer support, mental health referrals, credit counseling, job and employment. This organization not only helps veterans, but also addresses the needs of their spouses, caregivers, and children. To date, the program has returned over 120 previously homeless veterans to independent living.

In the photo on the right, Companion LTC Bill Conley escorted eight residents to a church social. As residents progress in their recovery, the staff helps acknowledge their achievements with awards and social events, thus helping to promote pride in their accomplishments and re-integration into the community.



# OUR ETERNAL SALUTE

## Veterans Day Memorial Service

Berwyn Veterans Memorial in Berwyn, PA

A group photo of the Philadelphia Chapter veterans who attended a memorial service at the Berwyn Veterans Memorial in Berwyn, PA. The event began with a Police Color Guard and soloist singing the National Anthem. Washington's Prayer for the Country was read as well as the Poem "The Soldier". CPT Jack Ansley, Philadelphia Chapter member, read a History of Veterans Day. The Chapter Commander placed a wreath at the memorial while the names of those MOWW members who passed away last year were read.

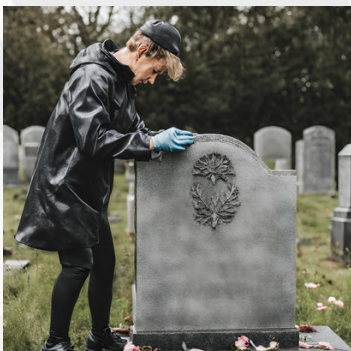
A beautiful and emotional story of two Marines who died in Beirut while defending the barracks was read by a Marine member of the Berwyn Veterans group. It was a beautiful day and a beautiful Veteran's Day ceremony.



## Headstone Cleaning

Memorial Park Cemetery, Tampa, FL

On Saturday, 18 November, MOWW Companions from the Sun City Center, FL Chapter alongside community leaders, first responders, and veterans met at Memorial Park Cemetery in Tampa, FL to clean 227 headstones.



## Honoring Veteran Gravesites

Mount Rest Cemetery, Wadsworth, IL



On 2 October, Nick Konz and Lee Lopez of the Chicago Chapter, with the associated firefighters of Illinois bagpipes and drums, honored the marking of three veteran graves with bronze markers at Mount Rest Cemetery, Wadsworth, Illinois.

# VETERANS DAY 2023

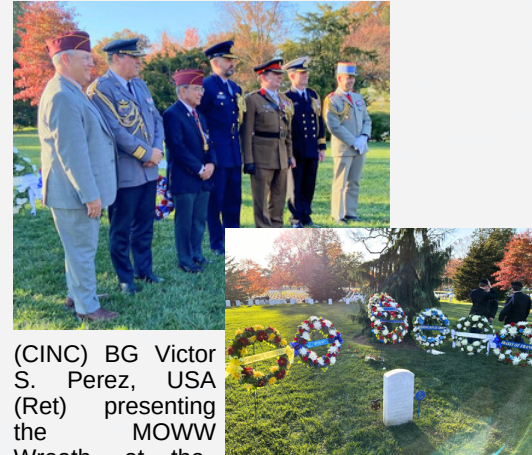
## MOWW Top-8 Veterans Day 2023 Activities at Arlington National Cemetery



Pictured from L-R: CS Col Michael Farrell, USMC (Ret), ROTC Cadet, IPCINC LTC (Dr) Michael A. Okin, USA (Ret), Col Vincente Ogilvie, USA (ret), SVCINC Lt Col David J. Worley, USAF (Ret), VCINC Lt Col Marlon Ruiz, USAF (Ret)



The annual VSO Arlington National Cemetery gathering had President Biden as the keynote speaker.



(CINC) BG Victor S. Perez, USA (Ret) presenting the MOWW Wreath at the Wreath laying ceremony. Along with invited guests of allied nations and COL Kenneth McCreedy, USA (Ret).

## Philadelphia Chapter



The Cecilia Snyder Middle School in conjunction with Bensalem High School JROTC in Bensalem, PA hosted a breakfast for Veterans. They served a hot and delicious breakfast and assigned students to each veteran to serve as our guides and eat with us.

A ceremony was held in the school auditorium where students gave a standing ovation to the veterans and put up a slide show photo of each veteran in uniform. A guest speaker who was injured in the Afghan War spoke about his time in uniform as a medic, about his accident and his lengthy recovery after being wounded. The program ended with a question and answer session with the veterans and students. A group photo of the students and veterans was taken in front of the school where a Humvee was parked.

## Roosevelt Chapter



On 11 November, the Col Theodore Roosevelt Chapter's Junior Vice-Commander and member of the New York Naval Militia, Major Mike Golden attended the unveiling of four American Revolution veteran's gravesites at Factory Village cemetery in the Town of Milton, NY.

In uniform, LTC (ret) Paul Farinella, Cdr, and fellow companion LTC (ret) Paul Flora from the Col Theodore Roosevelt Chapter. With the two LTCs, in civilian attire, is LT Al Zane USN (former). All three are Pershing Rifles brothers from Company Q8 at Hofstra University.



# CHAPTERS IN ACTION

## Greater El Paso Chapter

GREATER EL PASO CHAPTER, MASSING OF THE COLORS, held on Saturday, October 14, 2023 included representatives of various veterans' service organizations to include: United Veterans Organizations, American Legion, El Paso County Veterans Capital of the USA, Vietnam Veterans, Marine Corps League, El Paso Young Marines, City of El Paso Veterans Advisory Council, 82nd Airborne, and MOWW. Participants included the Fort Bliss Color Guard, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Veterans Organizations, City & County Officials, JROTC & ROTC Units, and an Army Band Ensemble. Due to a number of conflicting community events, fall break for schools, and major accidents, our numbers were smaller than usual, but still an outstanding event!



*November was a busy month for the Greater El Paso Chapter. The following activities were completed:*

**The GEP Veterans Forums** were the 2 weeks prior to Veterans Day. Companions and Patriots visited **11 elementary schools** during these 2 weeks, contacting **3,850 students**. Students varied from K-6th grade depending upon the school. Presenters shared their military activities, discussed Veterans Day, and distributed flags to the students. Students asked a variety of questions throughout the presentations. Some schools also had a parade, flag raising or presentation for the Veterans and parents as well.



Then there was the cool and rainy **Northeast Veterans Day Parade** on November 10, sponsored by Flags Across El Paso, which started at the National Guard Armory and went to Old Glory Memorial, where a Veterans Day Program was held. Eighty-one units were present.



On November 11, the **Downtown Veterans Day Parade**, sponsored by the United Veterans Organizations of El Paso was held with better weather and a good turnout! The Boy Scout unit sponsored by our Chapter was part of our unit and they were joined by about 50 other scouts and cub scouts representing a total of 5 troops and packs. JROTC Cadets from Bowie High School carried our colors in the Parade.

# CHAPTERS IN ACTION

## Chicago Chapter



CW2 Eliseo Lopez, commander Chicago chapter presents Dr. Berger with the MOWW patriot award in recognition of her outstanding service in teaching patriotism at Diamond Lake school in Mundelein Illinois. MOWW made a presentation to the 200 students at the school during Veterans Day week.

The story was covered by a local newspaper, the Daily Herald. Read the full story [here](#)-



**Veterans honor Diamond Lake District 76 principal for dedication to youth and...**

Diamond Lake School Principal Erica Berger was honored this week for service to youth and community



CW2 Eliseo Lopez, commander, Chicago chapter presented Mundelein High School principal, Dr. Alexandria Rios Taylor with the MOWW patriot award and a copy of Medal of Honor recipient Allen Lynch's book Zero to Hero. Colonel Mike Peck, MOWW veterans affairs chairman assisted.



CW2 Eliseo Lopez, attended a Civil War commemoration for private Silas Nichols, the last Civil War veteran buried in Lake County, Illinois. We had a two canon salute at the end of ceremony. President Abe Lincoln was the featured speaker.

## Phoenix Chapter

The Phoenix Chapter hosted its 58th Massing of the Colors and Service of Remembrance Ceremony MOWW signature event on SUN, 10 SEPT in partnership with the local B.P.O.E. Phoenix Elks Lodge Club #335.

The annual event is hosted in relation to and the annual 9-11 observance nation-wide. The event is attended by fellow veteran service organizations, civic community service organizations and supporting youth leadership and mentorship programs. The event program offers a pre-event commencement musical concert program, featured guest speakers, and patriotic displays and demonstrations by local Junior ROTC and Scouting affiliates.



# CHAPTERS IN ACTION

## Santa Cruz Valley Chapter

The Santa Cruz Valley Chapter in southern Arizona supported and attended the second of two bi-annual **Missing in America Project** (MIAP) local non-profit veteran service organization partners hosted ceremonial military burial events at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery grounds in Marana, AZ on SAT, the 28th of OCT.

The MIAP, a Vietnam veteran era veteran service founded organization, works with Federal, State and local government agencies throughout the country in the identification, claiming, and honoring of such forgotten fellow veterans at the time of their demise and provides a proper ceremonial military burial with full military honors, in gratitude tribute for their service and sacrifice to our great nation.

The ceremony is attended by supporting local community fellow veteran service organizations which partner and gather in solemn remembrance of fallen fellow veterans whose remains have been forgotten or left unclaimed at local mortuary establishments throughout the country.

More southern Arizona event details and videos go to [www.Facebook.com/ MOWWSCV/](https://www.Facebook.com/MOWWSCV/) or visit the national website at [www.miap.us](http://www.miap.us)



Join Us



The Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW) is a patriotic, nonpartisan, Veterans Service Organization (VSO) dedicated to promoting patriotism, civic responsibility, public service, and leadership in our nation's communities. MOWW's founding resulted from General of the Armies John J. Pershing's request that his officers continue serving America after their active military service ended following World War I. Since MOWW's establishment in 1919, MOWW Companions have lived by the Order's motto, "It is nobler to serve than to be served."

**To join MOWW visit: [moww.org/become-a-companion/](https://moww.org/become-a-companion/)**

## **VETERAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

### **Chapter Check-In by Region Veteran Affairs member**

Chapter check-in by region member by phone or video, use the VA Cmte Zoom account.

Speak with the chapter commander until the commander is able to appoint a VA companion.

Have the full year of significant Veteran observances in front of you.

Have the list of events the other chapters submitted for the award.

Plan your visits. Two (2) chapters per month before the third (3rd) Tuesday.

<https://moww.org/members/chapter-officers/#1669827883644-ba722e60-2172>

Region I, Maine: 7 states, 7 chapters

Region III, New York: 4 states, 4 chapters

Region V, Georgia: 4 states, 7 chapters

Region VII, Louisiana: 5 states, 6 chapters

Region XIII, Arizona: 5 states, 8 chapters

Region II, Illinois: 10 states, 4 chapters

Region IV, Virginia: 4 states, 5 chapters

Region VI, Florida: 3 states, 7 chapters

Region VIII, Texas: 5 states, 6 chapters

Region XIV, California: 8 states, 10 chapters

#### Check-in Agenda:

1. Get the chapter's immediate support needs.
2. Remind the chapter to record last month's events.
3. Review the chapter plan for the coming month.
4. Get the chapter plan for:
  - a. May, Memorial Day
  - b. Nov, Veterans Day
  - c. Massing of the Colors
  - d. Dec, Wreaths Across America
  - e. Reporting of Veterans' headstones needing repair
5. Get the chapter results for:
  - a. May, Memorial Day
  - b. Nov, Veterans Day
  - c. Massing of the Colors
  - d. Dec, Wreaths Across America
  - e. Reporting of Veterans' headstones needing repair
6. Review the types of events that can go on the Awards form.
7. Discuss City Veterans Council membership and events.
8. Discuss County Veterans Council membership and events.
9. Discuss State Veterans Council membership and events.
10. Review immediate needs from the region or/and national.
11. Encourage the chapter to:
  - a. Submit press releases before and after an event.
  - b. Write an article on the event from planning to clean up.
  - c. Submit Chapters In Action to the magazine.
  - d. Encourage attendance at region conferences.
  - e. Encourage attendance at national convention.



# **COMMITTEE ITEMS**

## **VETERAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

### **Chapter Survey on Region and VA Committee Support**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**During this year, the region Veteran Affairs Committee member was tasked to provide intentional support through personal contact with the chapters in the region.**

**Please evaluate the performance in July. Return this survey to your region member.**

1. Did the region VA member help the chapter member gain greater awareness of Veterans Affairs concerns?

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2. Did the region VA member help the chapter member in planning Veterans Affairs chapter tasks?

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3. Did the region VA member help the chapter member in executing Veterans Affairs chapter tasks?

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4. Did the region VA member help the chapter member in reporting Veterans Affairs chapter tasks?

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5. Was the increased contact by the VA member welcomed by the chapter member?

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Suggestions.

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