

Sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Connecticut and its Auxiliary



ORDER YOUR TICKETS

SOON!!!

Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Annual Awards Dinner

SUNDAY

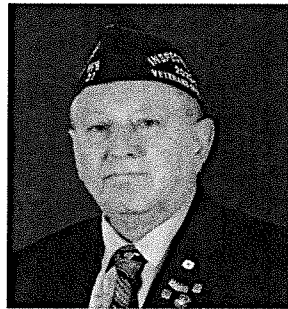
JANUARY 14, 2024, Starts Promptly At 12:45pm

\$25.00 per-person

**IN THE GRAND BALLROOM OF THE
ROCKY HILL SHERATON HOTEL
CAPITAL BLVD
ROCKY HILL , CONNECTICUT**



Representing the Commander-in-Chief,
our Special Guest for the dinner will be
The VFW Inspector General
Peter Mascetti From Europe



**EVERY POST AND
AUXILIARY SHOULD HAVE A
REPRESENTATIVE AT THIS
GREAT EVENT**

Buffett Menu

*Plated (pre-set) Caesar Salad - Roast Sirloin of Beef with Homemade Brown Gravy
Mashed Potatoes – Stir Fry Vegetables - Rolls - Butter - Coffee - Tea
Desert –Tiramisu*

The winners of the 53rd Annual State Voice of Democracy and Youth Essay Programs will be announced at this Dinner. We need your cooperation to make this a Huge Success.

Please make checks payable to: The VFW and mail with the reservation form below

Deadline for tickets is Wednesday January 10, 2024

Mail To: RICH DIFEDERICO, CHAIRMAN - P.O. BOX 429 - ROCKY HILL, CONNECTICUT 06067

NAME: _____ STREET: _____ TOWN: _____

ZIP _____ CHECK/MONEY ORDER IN THE AMOUNT OF \$ _____ IS ENCLOSED.

I need a Gluten Free meal _____ I need a Vegetarian Meal (Zucchini Tart) _____

Greetings Comrades:

As you know, the VFW has been a vocal opponent of predatory claim shark companies who charge veterans illegal fees for sub-par VA benefit claims assistance. Make no mistake, the proliferation of these illicit organizations is a threat not only to the VFW's cornerstone Veterans Service program, but an even greater threat to the VA benefits system as we know it. Over the last few months, we have ratcheted up the pressure on these companies by passing legislation to crack down on their practices at the state level and working to help veterans bring litigation against them. We have trained your service officers to know how to handle claim sharks and continue to seek out veterans who need help getting out of these predatory contracts.

The Claim Sharks felt the pressure from the VFW and last week launched their latest salvo, trying to normalize and legitimize their financial exploitation of our nation's disabled veterans – they even named VSOs like the VFW as their “threats.” While we should be flattered that they recognize the threat we pose, now is the time where we come together to decisively defeat this scourge. Like the VFW said last year before Congress, “any group that fails to adhere to VA's well-established standards of accreditation and fee arrangements should be greeted at the door by Capitol Police, not offered a seat at the same table as VA-accredited representatives who are held to certain professional and ethical standards.”

Bottom line: Predatory claim shark companies are engaging in illegal activities. There is no gray area here, no matter how much money they want to throw at it. Their latest collusion is a desperate attempt to avoid accountability.

Your VFW has aggressively pursued this issue in all corners of government, solidifying the veterans' community's stance on this issue. You will see more from the VFW in the coming weeks, asking you to take action with your Congressional representatives, your state legislatures, and your communities. In the meantime, please read up on the facts and familiarize yourself with this issue, if you have not already. I have included a branded VFW Fact Sheet on claim sharks for you to use and distribute widely to veterans. Please feel free to post it on your social media and use it in your community.

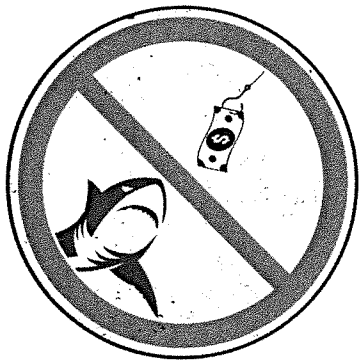
For more than a century, your VFW has been on the forefront of advocating for veterans and their earned benefits. In the last year alone, more than 550,000 veterans received more than \$13 billion in benefits from VA through the diligence and professionalism of the VFW's global network of VA-accredited service officers. Not a penny of this \$13 billion went to line the pockets of the VFW. It all went to the veterans, as the law requires.

Comrades: This fight may get a little messy in the coming weeks, but we will uphold the principles of our charter “to assist worthy comrades...and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans.” The VFW will stop Claim Sharks and we are eager to serve alongside you in this fight.

Yours in Comradeship,

Duane Sarmiento


Commander-in-Chief



DON'T FEED THE SHARKS



DontFeedTheSharks.org

What is a "Claim Shark"?

- A Claim Shark is an individual or company that charges hefty fees to "assist" or "consult" veterans with filing their VA benefit claims – this practice is illegal!
- Claim Sharks are not VA accredited, meaning they aren't required to adhere to the well-established professional and ethical standards of VA accreditation, so their advice can often be misleading or even fraudulent.
- Like a "Loan Shark," once you're in, you can't get out, and may be subject to new and hidden fees whenever you get a new rating, no matter who does the work.

Some of their predatory practices are:

- Promising or guaranteeing an increased disability rating or percentage increase.
- Advertising expedited VA claims decisions.
- Requesting login credentials to access a veteran's personal information through secure VA websites like eBenefits or VA.gov.
- Using confusing tactics or ambiguous language to mislead claimants or coerce them into signing a contract.
- Telling veterans to forego VA exams and offering health consultations within their own network of doctors.

Who are the Claim Sharks?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| ➤ Trajector Medical | ➤ Patriot Angels |
| ➤ Vet Benefits Guide | ➤ Veteran Care Services |
| ➤ Veterans Guardian | ➤ VetComm |
| ➤ VA Claims Insider | ➤ VA Claims Academy |
| ➤ Telemedica | ➤ Vet Assist |

Veterans can protect themselves by:

- Always working with VA accredited representatives.
- Attending all exams ordered by VA.
- Not signing contracts.
- Not agreeing to fees or payments from future benefits.
- Not agreeing to pay for medical consultations or opinions.
- Not providing access to Protected Health Information or Personal Identifiable Information.

Who is NOT a Claim Shark?

- VA accredited veterans service organization representatives, like the VFW
- VA accredited claims agents
- VA accredited attorneys
- Attorneys assisting with Camp LeJeune lawsuits who do not charge excessive fees

Connecticut as of Friday, December 1, 2023

City	Post	Dst	Total	Prior Year	Percent	Div	Need
Division 3	356 to 749 Members						
OAKVILLE	7330	5	485	497	97.58%	3	12
Division 4	246 to 355 Members						
STRATFORD	9460	1	287	323	88.85%	4	36
JEWETT CITY	10004	4	219	251	87.25%	4	32
NEW BRITAIN	511	3	251	315	79.68%	4	64
Division 5	185 to 245 Members						
NAUGATUCK	1946	2	249	233	106.86%	5	-16
DANBURY	149	1	202	233	86.69%	5	31
EAST HAMPTON	5095	6	161	195	82.56%	5	34
DEVON	7788	2	154	192	80.20%	5	38
PAWCATUCK	1265	4	148	187	79.14%	5	39
WALLINGFORD	591	2	148	188	78.72%	5	40
NEW MILFORD	1672	5	143	187	76.47%	5	44
Division 6	143 to 184 Members						
MONTVILLE	10060	4	148	158	93.67%	6	10
MANCHESTER	2046	3	147	157	93.63%	6	10
WILLIMANTIC	1724	4	161	175	92.00%	6	14
PLAINFIELD	5446	4	133	147	90.47%	6	14
WINDSOR LOCKS	6123	3	132	146	90.41%	6	14
WATERBURY	201	2	155	180	86.11%	6	25
NORWICH	594	4	143	168	85.11%	6	25
MYSTIC	3263	4	131	154	85.06%	6	23
CANAAN	6851	5	141	177	79.66%	6	36
WESTPORT	399	1	129	162	79.62%	6	33
PRESTON	9452	4	128	162	79.01%	6	34
BROOKFIELD	10201	1	120	169	71.00%	6	49
PUTNAM	1523	4	117	176	66.47%	6	59
Division 7	112 to 142 Members						
WOLCOTT	1979	2	113	123	91.86%	7	10
ROCKY HILL	2138	3	110	137	80.29%	7	27
YALESVILLE	9965	2	92	119	77.31%	7	27
PLAINVILLE	574	3	89	117	76.06%	7	28
NEW LONDON	189	4	80	113	70.79%	7	33
OLD SAYBROOK	10153	6	87	137	63.50%	7	50
Division 8	88 to 111 Members						
NIANTIC	5849	4	93	89	104.49%	8	-4
NOROTON HEIGHTS	6933	1	93	103	90.29%	8	10
AVON	3272	3	82	95	86.31%	8	13
WATERTOWN	5157	5	81	97	83.50%	8	16
NEWTOWN	308	1	88	106	83.01%	8	18
BERLIN	10732	3	74	93	79.56%	8	19
TRUMBULL	10059	1	79	101	78.21%	8	22
WINSTED	296	5	79	101	78.21%	8	22
NEW HAVEN	12150	2	63	88	71.59%	8	25
Division 9	68 to 87 Members						
CANTERBURY	10688	4	78	78	100.00%	9	0
OLD LYME	1467	4	67	69	97.10%	9	2
GUILFORD	7666	2	63	68	92.64%	9	5
PROSPECT	8075	2	74	80	92.50%	9	6
MIDDLETOWN	583	6	75	87	86.20%	9	12
ELLINGTON	10689	3	57	68	83.82%	9	11
WATERFORD	6573	4	59	71	83.09%	9	12
EAST HARTFORD	2083	3	60	73	82.19%	9	13
SUFFIELD	9544	3	58	71	81.69%	9	13
SIMSBURY	1926	3	61	84	72.61%	9	23
BRANFORD	12106	2	49	74	66.21%	9	25

City	Post	Dst	Total	Prior Year	Percent	Div	Need
Division 10	51 to 67 Members						
EAST KILLINGLY	4908	4	49	56	87.50%	10	7
LEDYARD	4608	4	46	54	85.18%	10	8
CLINTON	9918	6	43	53	81.13%	10	10
NEW CANAAN	653	1	44	55	80.00%	10	11
WINDSOR	4740	3	48	62	77.41%	10	14
MADISON	2096	2	43	57	75.43%	10	14
NORWALK	603	1	42	61	68.85%	10	19
Division 11 (Upper)	10 to 50 Members (31 to 50)						
SOUTHURY	1607	2	43	45	95.55%	11	2
EAST HADDAM	3336	6	34	37	91.89%	11	3
SALEM	2774	4	32	35	91.42%	11	3
ANSONIA	597	2	36	40	90.00%	11	4
STAMFORD	9617	1	38	43	88.37%	11	5
HEBRON	8776	3	37	42	88.09%	11	5
THOMPSON	10088	4	41	48	85.41%	11	7
HAMDEN	10321	2	41	49	83.67%	11	8
HARTFORD	254	3	30	37	81.08%	11	7
CHESHIRE	10052	2	24	32	75.00%	11	8
SEYMOUR	12084	2	27	36	75.00%	11	9
WEST HAVEN	9422	2	26	37	70.27%	11	11
PORTLAND	6121	6	23	34	67.64%	11	11
STAFFORD SPRINGS	9990	3	31	50	62.00%	11	19
Division 11 (Lower)	10 to 50 Members (10 to 30)						
DURHAM	10169	6	10	10	100.00%	11	0
ESSEX	6726	6	27	28	96.42%	11	1
WEST WILLINGTON	938	3	26	27	96.29%	11	1
COLCHESTER	6990	4	18	20	90.00%	11	2
THOMASTON	572	5	24	27	88.88%	11	3
HIGGANUM	10690	6	24	28	85.71%	11	4
COS COB	10112	1	20	25	80.00%	11	5
BRIDGEPORT	10273	1	24	30	80.00%	11	6
COVENTRY	10589	3	20	25	80.00%	11	5
TAFTVILLE	2212	4	24	30	80.00%	11	6
LAKEVILLE	9243	5	15	21	71.42%	11	6
FAIRFIELD	9427	1	16	29	55.17%	11	13
District Totals		99	1191	1407	84.64%	5	216
State Totals			8453	10044	84.15%		1591

District Commander: District 1: Matthew Seebeck

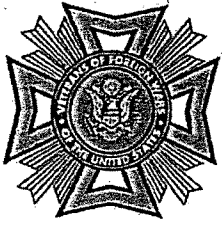
- Division Commander: 3. Post 7330 Erich Ruman
- Division Commander: 4. Post 9460 Steve Evangelista
- Division Commander: 5. Post 1946 John LeBlanc
- Division Commander: 6. Post 10060 David Lamirande
- Division Commander: 7. Post 1979 Thomas Griffin
- Division Commander: 8. Post 5849 Robert Farrior
- Division Commander: 9. Post 10688 William D'Appollonio
- Division Commander: 10. Post 4908 Brian Simmons
- Division Commander (U): 11. Post 1607 Kenneth Korsu
- Division Commander (L): 11. Post 10169 Charles Arrigoni

Congratulations to all of the Division Commanders of the Month. Great Job, Please keep it up. Also, remember that many post members dues expire at the end of December, please check your roster and touch base with them.

Thanks Rich DiFederico, Commander

Connecticut as of Friday, December 1, 2023

State	Post	Dst	Total	Prior Year	Percent	Div	Need
District Totals	1	5	968	1107	87.44%	5	139
District Totals	2	4	1915	2241	85.45%	3	326
District Totals	3	2	1400	1641	85.31%	4	241
District Totals	4	3	1313	1599	82.11%	4	286
District Totals	5	1	1182	1440	82.08%	5	258
District Totals	6	6	484	609	79.47%	6	125
District Totals		99	1191	1407	84.64%	5	216



DEPARTMENT OF CONNECTICUT VFW
AND ITS AUXILIARY



TO: ALL POSTS AND AUXILIARIES

LAST CALL

FROM: RICHARD DIFEDERICO, STATE COMMANDER
GRACE KELLY, STATE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

Dear Comrades and Auxiliary Members; As we once again approach this blessed and joyous holiday season we would like you to help in remembering those Veterans who are in the Rocky Hill Veterans Home and the Newington and West Haven Veterans Hospitals.

We can make their holiday a bit brighter, with your help, by providing a gift to each one of them.as we have in past years.

Your Posts and Auxiliaries can send donations to support this effort. Please make your checks payable to the Department of Connecticut VFW and please mail to: Ron Rusko, QM - P.O. BOX 429 Rocky Hill, Ct. 06067

NAME AND NUMBER OF YOUR POST OR AUXILIARY



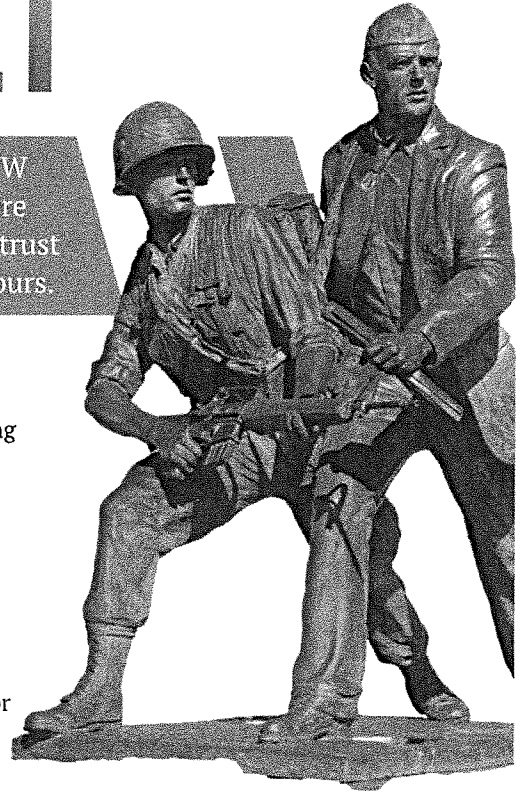
Thank you!
RICH & GRACE





FACT SHEET

As the nation's oldest major war veterans' organization, the VFW has an impeccable and longstanding record of service and stewardship. More than 4.4 million patriotic Americans, both members and non-members, entrust the VFW with financial contributions and dedicate millions of volunteer hours.



THE VFW'S VITAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Educate separating service members about their well-earned VA benefits through private benefits counseling sessions with a VFW Accredited Service Officer.

Advocate for America's veterans and their families on Capitol Hill, ensuring *promises made* to veterans are *promises kept*.

Help cover rent, utilities or groceries for a military family struggling with the hardships of war.

Deliver morale-boosting "welcome home" celebrations for service members who have returned from combat.

2,300+

Number of VA-accredited VFW representatives across America and abroad, helping veterans fight for the VA benefits they have earned.

152,883

Number of service members and their family members hosted at VFW Military Assistance Program (MAP) events.

\$11.2 billion

The total annual amount the VFW helped veterans recoup in VA disability compensation and pension benefits in fiscal year 2022.

\$1.6 million+

Amount of academic scholarships awarded to 357 veterans and service members.

21

Number of times the VFW has testified to Congress in the last 12 months alone. The VFW has been instrumental in virtually every major legislative victory for veterans in the 20th and 21st centuries.

\$3 million+

Amount of scholarships, monetary awards and other incentives the VFW distributes annually to middle and high school students through two major patriotic essay competitions.

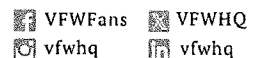
\$589,007

Value of financial assistance awarded to military families to help cover basic needs in times of crisis. 61% of the funds covered basic housing needs in fiscal year 2023.



JOIN THE VFW

Connect With Us



Updated September 2023

Learn more about the VFW's programs and services at vfw.org.

About the VFW

We trace our roots back to 1899 when veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902) founded local organizations to secure rights and benefits for their service. Many arrived home wounded or sick. There was no medical care or veterans' pension for them, and they were left to care for themselves. In their misery, some of these veterans banded together and formed organizations that would eventually band together and become known as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Our Mission: To foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our veterans, the military and our communities. To advocate on behalf of all veterans.

Our Vision: Ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.



The VFW by the numbers

1.4 million+

Number of VFW and VFW Auxiliary members.

5,672

Number of VFW Posts worldwide.



Helping struggling military families

488

Number of grants provided to military families facing financial hardship through *VFW Unmet Needs*.

\$356,512

Amount of grants provided through *VFW Unmet Needs* covering housing for struggling military families.

253

Number of military families who received assistance with housing needs.



Cutting red tape

115,000

Approximate number of veterans the VFW assisted in submitting new VA claims in fiscal year 2022.

Nearly 13,500

Number of VA claims filed by the VFW's Pre-Discharge offices in fiscal year 2022 resulting in more than \$64 million in disability compensation.

20+

Number of VFW Pre-Discharge offices across the nation, including the military district of Washington, D.C., area.



1899

Year the VFW started to fight for veterans, service members and their families.



Inspiring patriotism in young people

26,250+

Number of high school students who competed in the 2022-23 VFW Voice of Democracy competition.

66,800+

Number of students who competed in the 2022-23 VFW Patriot's Pen competition.



Improving life in America

5 million

Number of volunteer hours contributed by VFW members annually.

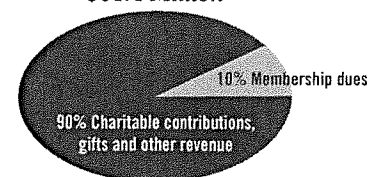
\$45 million

Amount donated annually to local community service projects by VFW members.

The VFW Relies on Donations

The VFW is a 501(c), and programs are made possible through membership dues and tax-deductible donations from good-hearted Americans.

**Cost of VFW Program Services:
\$61.4 Million**



Source: VFW 2022 Annual Report

