VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

January—March 2026

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It's not the dues you paid to be a member, it's the price you paid to be eligible.

GENERAL WILLIAM STARK ROSECRANS | VFW POST 3261

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS
Jimmy "C" Carradine, Post Commander



In light of the current situation in Iran, on behalf of Post 3261 I would like to express our support to the troops who have been deployed to the region. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the military families who have lost loved ones and to those who have suffered injuries in the Middle East Region.

Although I wasn't able to include the full article due to limited space in the newsletter, I have included in my comments an excerpt from an article, ***"VFW Honors National Black History Month,"*** which is featured on VFW website (https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases). The excerpt reads as follows:

"The VFW takes the opportunity to celebrate Black Americans' legacy of valor and contribution to the nation. Dating back to the birth our nation, Black Americans have served in every conflict, often defending freedoms that they were not fully afforded at home. From the courageous Buffalo Soldiers and the pioneering Tuskegee Airman to the men and women currently serving today, their fight for democracy has helped fundamentally shape the strength of the U.S. Armed Forces.

We encourage all citizens to move beyond simple observation by learning the stories of heroes like Doris Miller, the688th Central Postal Directory Battalion and the countless unsung Black service members who have stood the watch. The more than 1.3 million of the VFW AND ITS Auxiliary salute the indelible legacy of Black Americans in uniform, and we honor their bravery and continued service which helps to secure our way of life."

The election of Post Officers will be held at our General Membership Meeting on April 14, 2026.

CANTEEN
Open Monday—Sunday
2—10 PM

TACO TUESDAY 4—9 PM
Tacos $1.50
(Asada or Chicken)
Wet Burrito—$7.00
(Asada or Chicken)
Nachos—$5.00
(Asada or Chicken)

BINGO WEDNESDAY
Open @ 4:30 PM
Starts @ 6:30 PM
Menu:
Hot Dogs | Hamburgers
Cheese Toast | Patty Melt
Taco Salad | French Fries
Desserts: Brownies & Pineapple Upside Down Cake

RENT THE HALL FOR YOUR NEXT PARTY OR EVENT!
(Capacity: 250 Persons)
Security Deposit is $500
(Required to hold the date)

Friday & Saturday $2,200
(Bar closes at midnight)

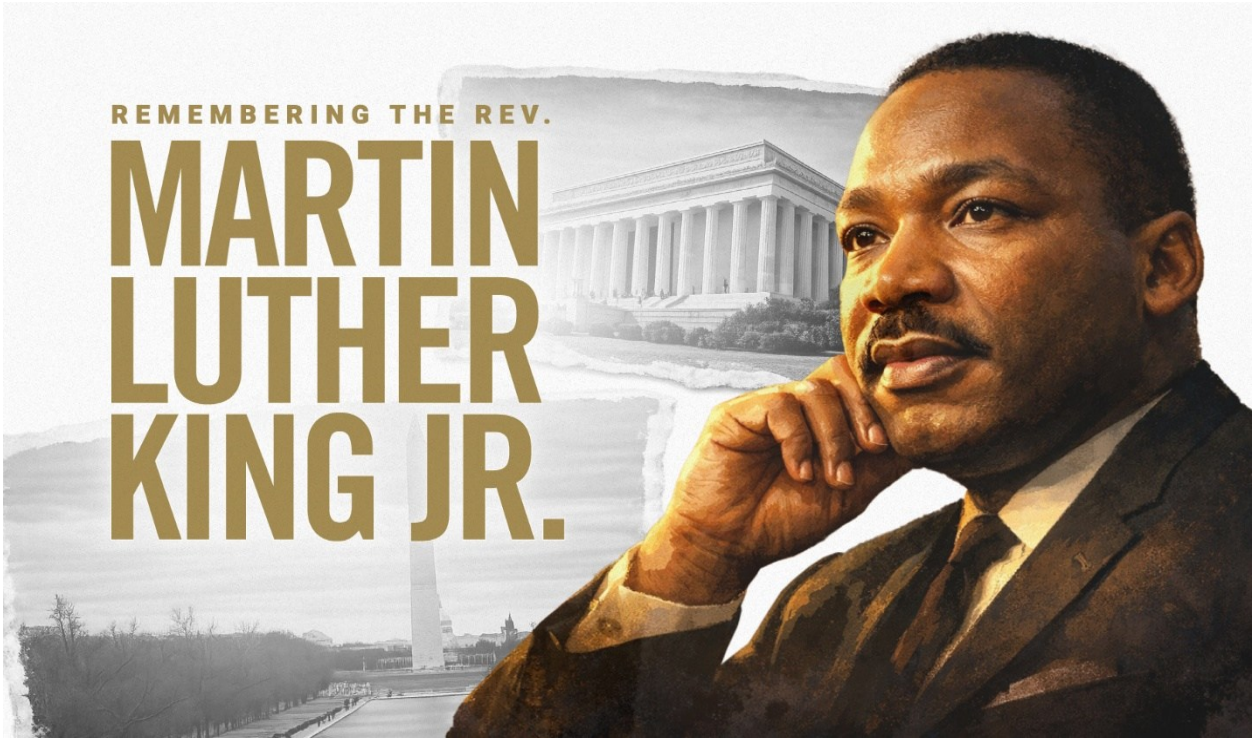
Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

Remembering the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

The VFW encourages Americans to honor his legacy through service, unity and positive change.

January 16, 2026

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — On Monday, Jan. 19, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and its Auxiliary join the nation in honoring the life and legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose leadership, courage, and commitment to peaceful progress helped shape a stronger and more inclusive America.



Born on Jan. 15, 1929, King was a minister and civic leader who called on Americans to rise above division and work together to build a more just and peaceful society. His efforts to expand opportunity and strengthen the nation's shared values left a lasting mark on American history. Since becoming a federal holiday in 1983, the observance of King's birthday has also become a national day of service — a reminder that progress is achieved not only through words, but through action.

On behalf of the more than 1.3 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary, we honor the Rev. King by continuing to work for positive change in our communities — through volunteerism, civic engagement, and a shared dedication to making our nation stronger for generations to come.

New Research Links Burn Pit Fumes and Brain Injuries

Results of a national study released last year link brain trauma to troops who served near toxic burn pits during their service overseas.

January 20, 2026

Since the adoption of the PACT Act by lawmakers in 2022 — a decisive win spearheaded by VFW's lobbying on Capitol Hill — research on toxic burn pits and their effects on veterans who served near them has increased in scope.

"The PACT Act is the most significant toxic exposure legislation since the Agent Orange Act, but it must continue to evolve," VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli said. "A key component was continued research resulting from exposure."



Conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in collaboration with the Department of Defense and the VA, a new study in late July connected military service near burn pits to a greater risk of mental health issues and brain trauma.

The research examined the health records of more than 440,000 troops who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2011. The findings linked higher rates of depression and other mood disorders, as well as intracranial injuries and traumatic brain damage, among troops stationed near toxic burn pits. The study also noted that the toxic chemicals released during uncontrolled combustion may include chemicals with "deleterious" neurobehavioral effects.

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New Research Links Burn Pit Fumes and Brain Injuries

(Continued from page 3)

While there is cause for alarm among those exposed to burn pits during their service, the study also opens new possibilities for the advancement of health care services and benefits provided by the VA to veterans. Since 2022, the VA has delivered more than $6.8 billion in PACT Act benefits to veterans and surviving family members as a result.

“As research advances, the VFW will keep pressing to ensure every link between service-related exposures and illness is recognized so veterans receive the care and benefits they have earned,” said Figlioli, who saw NVS’s network of VFW-accredited service officers recover more than $14.6 billion in VA benefits in 2024 alone.

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LONGER EXPOSURE EQUALS MORE RISK

Here are notable findings by the NIH on the examination of health records of more than 440,000 troops who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2011:

- Troops who were exposed to burn pit fumes for at least 129 days during their deployments were 27 percent more likely to report symptoms of severe stress than individuals at bases without the toxic smoke, and 37 percent more likely to suffer from any intracranial injury.

- Troops with more than 474 days near the burn pits were 68 percent more likely to report severe stress than deployed troops without the smoke exposure, and 124 percent more likely to develop intracranial wounds.

Sleep disorder issues were 18 percent higher for troops with four months near the burn pits and 35 percent higher for those who spent about 16 months nearby.

This article is featured in the 2026 January/February issue of VFW magazine, and was written by Ismael Rodriguez Jr., associate editor for VFW magazine.

A ‘Big Step Forward’ for Gulf War Veterans

Gulf War Illness (GWI) is now officially recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 30 years after symptoms began.

January 21, 2026

On Oct . 1, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved an official diagnostic code for Gulf War Illness (GWI) more than 30 years after symptoms of the condition began to be reported. The illness, which is described as an amalgamation of several chronic symptoms including fatigue, respiratory issues, joint pain and gastrointestinal pains, has been historically dismissed by doctors and physicians as psychological.

Soldiers from the 24th Mechanized Infantry Brigade from Fort Stewart, Georgia, carry their weapons as they undergo chemical training in eastern Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield in November 1990.I



n an article posted by the Boston University School of Public Health, Denise Nichols, a Gulf War veteran and veteran advocate, said the implementation of the code has been a “big step forward for medicine, research and the health of our military community.”

With an established diagnostic code, patients with GWI can be easily found through medical search records, as opposed to being found through less efficient methods, such as social media.

The code also will allow for faster, more intensive research into the condition, better monitoring of symptoms and better tracking of effective treatments.

VFW Director of National Veteran Services Michael Figlioli claims that VFW Gulf War veterans will benefit greatly from this new diagnostic code.

“The CDC recognizing Gulf War Illness in a formal manner is significant for a number of reasons,” Figlioli said. “First off, there is validation that this is not ‘made up,’ or it’s ‘no such thing.’ It also provides for evidence-based care and not anecdotal treatment, better overall symptom management and finally, it will help substantiate veterans’ claims for benefits from the VA, leading to an overall better quality of life.”

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A 'Big Step Forward' for Gulf War Veterans

(Continued from page 5)

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THE PUSH FOR MORE ANSWERS

The demolition of a chemical weapons depot in 1991 in the Khamisiyah region in southern Iraq is believed to have been a cause of GWI for more than 100,000 troops.

According to an article written by Linda Hersey for Stars and Stripes, inquiries into the demolition were "revived" when a group of veterans began to push for the declassification of tens of thousands of documents that could be detrimental to the research of GWI and chemical exposure during the war.

Ronald Brown, a retired Army specialist and Gulf War veteran, was present during the demolition of the weapons depot in the Khamisiyah region. He claims he began to feel sick just 15 minutes after the building was demolished.

"I came home sick and the problems continue," Brown said. "This has been going on for 34 years."

Included among the unreleased documents are interview transcripts with troops who also were present during the demolitions. This information could help doctors establish a timeline for GWI, which could help with the identification of effective treatments.

Brown is helping to lead the effort in the push for these critical documents to be released, along with veteran advocacy groups Veterans for Common Sense and the Vietnam Veterans of America.

"Whether [declassifying the documents] reveals something — that remains to be seen," said Army veteran Anthony Hardie, a former staff sergeant and national director of Veterans for Common Sense. "It is a matter of justice to Gulf War veterans."

While efforts from veterans' advocacy organizations have been persistent, the declassification and subsequent releases of Gulf War Illness-related documents have been slow and inconsistent. Despite this, Gulf War veterans continue to push for answers so that there is a stronger understanding of the largely misdiagnosed illness.

This article is featured in the 2026 January/February issue of VFW magazine, and was written by Danny Cook, senior writer for VFW magazine.

VFW Applauds Federal Court Decision Striking Down Louisiana 'PLUS Act'

A message from VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore

February 11, 2026

WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) applauds the federal court's decision striking down Louisiana's so-called "PLUS Act" as unconstitutional. This ruling sends a clear message: States cannot rewrite federal law to accommodate companies that rip off veterans – and any state considering similar legislation should take notice.

For years, the VFW has warned that laws like the PLUS Act undermine Congress' carefully balanced system for veterans' benefits and open the door to abuse and even fraud by unaccredited, fee-charging operators. The court's decision confirms that those warnings were justified.

Let's be honest – this law was never about protecting veterans. It was about protecting businesses that charge veterans unjustifiable fees for services that should be free. We saw through that and so did the court. The Louisiana law sidelined legitimate, accredited representatives to prop up an unregulated industry that scams veterans and the court shut it down.

The VA claims system is governed by federal law for a reason: to ensure uniform standards, qualified representation and real accountability – especially for agents and attorneys who can already charge for certain claims in the marketplace. When states attempt to create their own fee structures and regulatory schemes, they weaken those protections and confuse veterans.

This decision should serve as a warning to every state considering similar bills. If you try to override federal law and legitimize unaccredited operators, you will lose – and veterans will pay the price in the meantime.

Veterans should never have to wonder whether someone helping them is legitimate or just looking for a payday. If you're OK with putting veterans into debt, you're not serving them, you're exploiting them.

The VFW has consistently led the fight against "Claim Sharks," even when it meant facing lawsuits, political pressure and well-funded opposition. When others hesitated, we didn't. We stood up because veterans deserve better. And we will keep standing up, no matter how uncomfortable it makes people who profit off this system.

This ruling preserves the integrity of the VA accreditation system and protects veterans from being steered toward unqualified, unregulated actors. It also reinforces a simple truth: accredited veterans service organizations like the VFW provide claims assistance free of charge – just as Congress intended.

This is a win for veterans across the country. It's a win for transparency, accountability and fairness. And it's a reminder that veterans' benefits should never be treated as a get-rich-quick scheme.

The VFW urges lawmakers nationwide to learn from this decision and focus on strengthening accredited assistance rather than creating unconstitutional workarounds that benefit bad actors. We will continue working with lawmakers and regulators to ensure veterans are protected, informed, and never pressured to pay for benefits they have earned through their service.

Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/2/vfw-applauds-federal-court-decision-striking-down-louisiana-plus-act

VFW First Woman Commander Makes History Delivering Legislative Priorities to Congress

'Caring for service members and veterans is not an abstract policy issue for me … it is personal'

March 03, 2026



WASHINGTON – In a standing-room-only chamber at the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Commander Carol Whitmore delivered forceful testimony Tuesday before a special joint hearing of the United States Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

The chamber was filled wall-to-wall with VFW and VFW Auxiliary members proudly wearing their caps, a visible show of unity behind their commander-in-chief, the first woman veteran to lead the VFW in its 126-year history. An overflow room for watching the hearing was also filled to capacity with VFW and Auxiliary members who traveled from across the country and around the world from all 52 departments of the organization.

VFW national staff and members who joined Whitmore on the dais were Assistant Adjutant General and Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci, National Legislative Service Director Kristina Keenan, National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli, and National Legislative Committee Chairman Jason Johns.

During the opening remarks, Ranking Member Blumenthal announced that he was going to the Senate floor at 12 p.m. EST to ask for unanimous consent for passage or a vote on S. 1032, the Major Richard Star Act, which was met with rousing applause.

Fellow Iowan, VFW member, and close personal friend, U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst introduced Whitmore to the members of the joint committee in attendance.

Before addressing policy, Whitmore paused to recognize service members currently deployed.

"Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Operation Epic Fury also and give our thoughts and prayers to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice," Whitmore said. "And those who are in harm's way, like the VFW Claims Representative Rosa Valdez currently serving in Kuwait."

She thanked Chairmen Jerry Moran and Mike Bost, Ranking Members Richard Blumenthal and Mark Takano, and members of both committees for the opportunity to testify on behalf of nearly 1.3 million VFW and Auxiliary members.

(Continued on page 9)

VFW First Woman Commander Makes History Delivering Legislative Priorities to Congress (Continued from page 8)

Whitmore's message to Congress was clear and unwavering: Honor the Contract. She framed her testimony around a single principle.

"When Americans raise their right hand and volunteer to serve, this nation makes a solemn promise: if they are wounded, become ill or die in service, America will care for them and their families," Whitmore said. "That promise is not charity. It is the binding contract between service members and the country they defend."

As applause filled the chamber, she addressed concerns about cost directly. "When some suggest that veterans' benefits are too expensive, let us be clear … this is the cost of war," Whitmore said. A former Army nurse, Whitmore emphasized her personal connection. "Caring for service members and veterans is not an abstract policy issue for me … it is personal," Whitmore said.

Whitmore praised the passage of the PACT Act but warned that implementation must match intent. "Passage alone does not fulfill the promise," Whitmore said.

She urged Congress to ensure the VA aggressively applies its authorities to address unrecognized toxic exposures, including Vietnam-era burn pits, K2 veterans, submariners and others exposed in hazardous conditions.

With PACT Act claims surging, Whitmore stressed that VA direct care and community care must function as one system. "Veterans experience health care in moments of need," Whitmore said. "In those moments, what matters most is reliable, timely, high-quality care delivered with dignity and respect."

She called for clear benchmarks on wait times and travel standards and urged passage of the Veterans' ACCESS Act of 2025. "Veterans should never have to fight their way through red tape just to receive the care they earned," Whitmore said.

Whitmore highlighted systemic shortcomings in the Foreign Medical Program, sharing the story of retired Army veteran Blane Gish in Berlin, who paid more than 5,000 euros up front for hearing aids and waited six months for reimbursement, only to receive a check that failed to account for exchange rates.

"Veterans overseas deserve equal treatment," Whitmore said. She also called for the modernization of CHAMP-VA, citing slow claims processing and limited access that strain military families. In one of the most powerful moments of the hearing, Whitmore asked veterans and families affected by suicide to stand. Dozens rose throughout the chamber.

"Members of the committee … this is the scope of the challenge before us," Whitmore said. She called for written, informed consent for VA-prescribed psychiatric medications and urged passage of the Veteran Suicide Prevention Act. "We cannot improve what we do not examine," Whitmore said.

(Continued on page 10)

VFW First Woman Commander Makes History Delivering Legislative Priorities to Congress (Continued from page 9)

Whitmore emphasized the need for cutting-edge treatment for traumatic brain injury and PTSD, sharing the story of Afghanistan veteran Joshua Starks, who found healing outside the VA only after a devastating personal loss. “Veterans should not have to leave the VA to find healing,” Whitmore said. She urged Congress to pass the Innovative Therapies Centers of Excellence Act to ensure that treatment is driven by science and urgency.

With nearly 200,000 service members leaving active duty annually, Whitmore raised concerns about inadequate Transition Assistance Program implementation – particularly for troops separating overseas.

“When service members separate without proper guidance, they risk delays in receiving the benefits they earned,” Whitmore said. She called for the passage of the TAP Promotion Act to ensure seamless continuity of care and compensation.

Though outside the committees’ primary jurisdiction, Whitmore urged full funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. “Service members are taught to leave no one behind. That commitment never ends,” Whitmore said.

She condemned proposed cuts despite record Pentagon budgets. “Fully fund DPAA so that our missing can receive their final salute on American soil,” Whitmore said.

Whitmore closed with a passionate call to end the unjust offset affecting more than 50,000 medically retired combat veterans.

“This is not double-dipping. This is double sacrifice,” Whitmore said. “Pass the Major Richard Star Act now!” The chamber erupted into sustained applause and a standing ovation from members in their VFW caps.

Whitmore concluded by reminding lawmakers that the All-Volunteer Force depends on trust. “Veterans have fulfilled their obligation. Now the country must Honor the Contract,” Whitmore said. “Not partially, not eventually, not someday, but today, fully and faithfully.”

She thanked the committee leadership and expressed readiness to answer questions, leaving behind a clear message echoed by the hundreds in attendance: Honor the Contract.

The presentation of S. 1032, the Major Richard Star Act, to the Senate for unanimous consent can be viewed live on C-SPAN and at senate.gov.

Go to the site below to connect to the link to the video and the full testimony of Commander Whitmore.

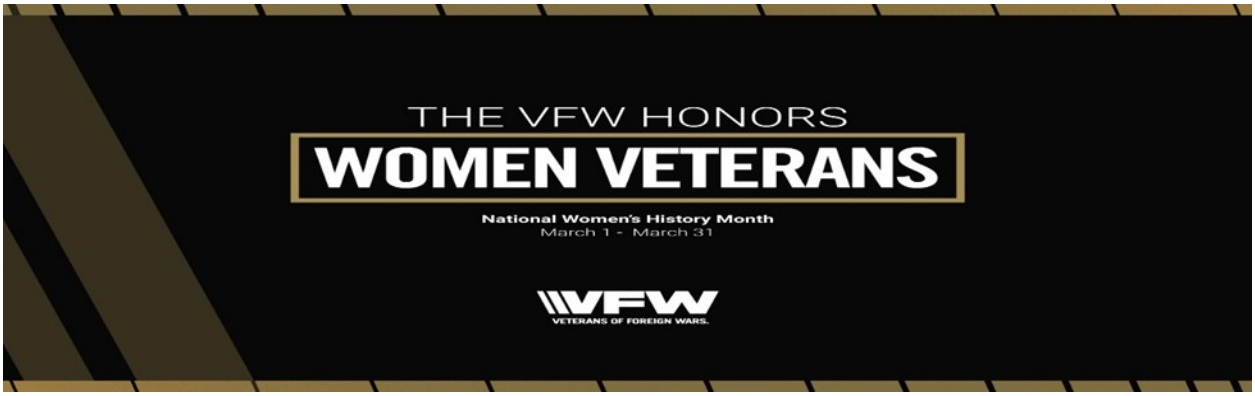
Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/3/vfw-first-woman-commander-makes-history-delivering-legislative-priorities-to-congress

THE VFW HONORS WOMEN VETERANS IN WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

In March, we recognize the resilience, service and sacrifice of our nation's brave women service members and veterans.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — This Women's History Month, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) joins a grateful nation in honoring and recognizing the generations of American women veterans who have protected our nation and helped build the strongest and most capable military that we have today.

Women have been an integral part of our nation's defense since its founding, with many serving as nurses, spies and even as disguised soldiers long before World War I, when they were allowed to openly serve in the U.S. military. Since then, almost 2.2 million women have served in uniform in every branch of the Armed Forces and in every war and conflict of the 20th and 21st centuries.



Congress passed Public Law 97-28 in 1981 designating "Women's History Week" to acknowledge the contributions women of every race, class and ethnic background have made to the nation despite being "consistently overlooked and undervalued in the body of American History." This moment recognized that women were not just participants in our history, but leaders at the forefront of every major progressive change, from suffrage and abolition to the modern civil rights movement. In 1987, this recognition was rightfully expanded to the entire month of March under Public Law 100-9.

VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore, the first woman to lead the organization in its 126-year history, reminds Americans, "The contributions of women to our national security are not simply a footnote in our history books, they are a cornerstone. The VFW salutes the women who have stood their ground on the battlefield, navigated challenging terrain and overcame blocking obstacles, all while carrying the heavy burden of proving their worth in hostile environments. They ensured that the 'right to serve' became a reality for all future generations. Their enduring achievements have played an indispensable role in securing our freedom and defining our way of life.

"I am honored to lead a VFW that is proud to recognize and celebrate the countless contributions of our nation's women service members and veterans, and remains committed to advocating for the respect, health care and benefits our women veterans have earned."

Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/2/vfw-honors-womens-history-month

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VFW POST 3261 OFFICERS

Commander – James "Jimmy C" Carradine

Senior Vice Commander – Anthony Dixon

Junior Vice Commander - Daniel "Dan" Medina

Quartermaster – Norman "Norm" Chibana

Chaplain - Anthony Dixon

1st Year Trustee – Patrick Tubal

2nd Year Trustee – Fermyn J. Archer

3rd Year Trustee – Robert J. Galda

Adjutant – Norman "Norm" Chibana

Service Officer – Larry "Skip" Anglin