



Department of South Dakota Program & Membership Guide



**Rick Vanden Hoek
State Commander**

“ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION”

2026-2027

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Commander's Motto

“ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION”

Comrades,

The strength of the VFW depends on the unity of our members. We must stay strong in the belief that our purpose is to ensure our veterans are getting the benefits they have earned. We must have strong leaders at every level of our organization. We have 47 Posts, 5 District and our Department. We must work in unison to ensure our veterans are taken care of.

This year is not about me. It is about our veterans. I am the Commander but this is our organization. We all play a part in ensuring we are doing the right thing in our communities for veterans. We need to look at long term ideas that we can improve on as the years go on. We cannot succeed if we only look at one year at a time. We cannot succeed if our leaders have personal agendas. We will succeed when we work as a team.

Department Programs and Goals

A Department Program and Membership Guide for the 2026-2027 year is enclosed. It will follow the National membership guide. I have made the All-State a little more difficult than All-American because I feel that is the way forward. I have included incentives for post to reach out and bring members back.

I will have recognition programs that might not look like past years. I want every District, Post and comrade to have an equal chance of earning incentives.

Membership: The Key to Success

Membership is the key to being able to help veterans. Our goal this year is 100%+1. It is a bit easier to achieve than before but I do have some focus areas. Continuous members are great, but we need to retain them from year to year. We need to focus on upgrading continuous members to lifetime members. The second focus is legacy memberships. These memberships will help the post and department when the member is passed. More important, that member will leave their legacy as a VFW member forever.

Mentorship and Leadership Development

We need to continue to develop strong leaders within the VFW. I encourage all members to talk with officers at every level to further your knowledge of our organization. I also would like to see more members attend post, District and Department meetings.

We all need to be mentors for our upcoming leaders at every level of the organization. Many people want to learn but there is no one there to take care of them. We need to mentor our new members. Do not overwhelm them, but let them learn before you give them duties. We can be our own worst enemy by alienating our new members with too many duties before they are ready.

I will again discuss my motto, “One Team, One Mission”. This means we need to work as a team to take care of veterans. This also means that we need to work with other veterans’ organizations to have a united front taking care of veterans through legislation. Our families are also part of the team. We cannot do our part without the support of our families. The last part of the team is our communities. We rely on our community support to assist taking care of veterans.

Respectfully



Rick Vanden Hoek
Commander, Dept. of South Dakota VFW

“ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION”
Commander Rick Vanden Hoek
2026-2027

Post and District Expectations/Obligations

VFW POST “to do” CHECKLIST

Use this checklist and Membership Guide to be a successful, thriving VFW Post. If your desire is to obtain All-State or All-American status, please refer to this Membership Guide. **Start working programs/checklist on July 1st!** Do not forget to include your Auxiliary when submitting reports. The Dept. office will continue to send out reminders in monthly General Orders (GO’s).

Access GO’s, Forms, this Checklist, SD VFW Program information, etc., at:

South Dakota VFW Website: <https://www.vfwsd.org>

National VFW website: <https://www.vfw.org>

| POST RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS | DUE BY: |
|---|----------------------|
| JULY | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Trustees' Quarterly Audit Report (Quartermaster & Adjutant Books & Records) (4 th Quarter, Apr - Jun) (Submit to Dept HQs) | Jul 30 th |
| AUGUST | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Complete Post BOND Forms (Submit to Dept HQs) | Aug 31 st |
| <u>Department Dues (based on membership total from previous Command Year)</u> | |
| -Hospital Fund (Supports VA Med Centers in SD) (.35 cents per member) | Aug 31 st |
| -Service & Rehabilitation Fund (Supports VAVS/VVS Programs in SD) (.20 cents per member) | Aug 31 st |
| -Memorial Park & Chapel (Supports cost of maintaining Park & Chapel located in Black Hills) (.10 cents per member) | Aug 31 st |
| <u>Department Donations (By Membership Category)</u> | |
| -Department Recruiting Events | Aug 31 st |
| -National Home | Aug 31 st |
| -Special Olympics | Aug 31 st |
| -National Veteran Service (NVS) (formerly VMS) (National Dashboard, \$125) All-American | Aug 31 st |
| -Defense Personnel POW/MIA Accounting Agency (National Dashboard, \$75) All-American | Aug 31 st |
| -Purchase Legacy Buddy Poppies (.30 cents each – OR Tin Tab Poppies .15 cents each – Must order minimum 500 Poppies and a minimum of 5 per member for larger Posts) | Aug 31 st |
| SEPTEMBER | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Attend Department Fall Council / Homecoming | |

| OCTOBER | |
|--|----------------------|
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Attend Fall District Meeting | |
| Pay District Dues (Pay District QM) | |
| Trustees' Quarterly Audit Report (Quartermaster & Adjutant Books & Records) (1 st Quarter, Jul - Sep) (Submit to Dept HQs) | Oct 30 th |
| Annual Awards Programs (Forward to District POC) | |
| Patriots Pen due to Post (One Entry to District Judging for every 15 Entries at Post Level, on Scholar's App – Must make entry on National All-American Dashboard to qualify) | Oct 31 st |
| Voice of Democracy due to Post (One Entry to District Judging for every 15 Entries at Post Level, on Scholar's App -Must make entry on National All-American Dashboard to qualify) | Oct 31 st |
| Teacher of the Year (Teacher Entry Grades (K-5) (6-8) (9-12) (Submit to Dept. Chair) | Oct 31 st |
| NOVEMBER | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Veterans Day Activities – Report activities on state dashboard | Nov 30 th |
| DECEMBER | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| JANUARY | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Complete Post & District Inspections – submit reports to Department | Jan 1 st |
| Public Servant Recognition (Entries to Dept Chair) (LE, Firefighter, Dispatcher & EMT) | Jan 1 st |
| Attend Mid-Winter District Meeting (Open Nominations of Dist. Officers) | |
| Attend Department Legislative Conference / VOD/PP/Teacher of the Year Banquet | |
| Trustees' Quarterly Audit Report (Quartermaster & Adjutant Books & Records) (2 nd Quarter, Oct - Dec) (Submit to Dept HQs) | Jan 30 th |
| FEBRUARY | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |

| MARCH | |
|---|----------------------|
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Scout of the Year (Boy/Girl) (Submit to Post-Mar 1 st) (send to Dept Chair-Apr 1 st) | Mar 1 st |
| Open Nominations of Post Officers | |
| APRIL | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Complete National Convention Form & Delegation Form (Submit Form/Fees to National) (QM will receive in Mail) | Annually |
| Complete Department Convention Form & Delegation Form (Submit Form/Fees to Dept HQs) | Annually |
| Trustees' Quarterly Audit Report (Quartermaster & Adjutant Books & Records) (3 rd Quarter, Jan - Mar) (Submit to Dept HQs) | Apr 30 th |
| Attend Spring District meeting (Election/Installation of District Officers) | |
| Election/Installation of Post Officers | |

| MAY | |
|---|----------------------|
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Memorial Day Activities -Report activities to State Dashboard | May 31 st |
| Loyalty Day Activities -Report activities to State Dashboard | May 31 st |
| Day of Service Activities -Sign up/Report activities to National Dashboard | May 31 st |
| Complete Tax Form 990 - Complete on IRS Website (Copy to Dept HQs) | Annually in May |
| Complete any outstanding requirements before All-State Judging | May 1 st |
| JUNE | |
| Complete & Maintain Monthly Accounting Report, Agenda, and Meeting Minutes | Monthly |
| Complete Post/District Election Report (Submit to National) | June 1 st |
| Complete Program Chairperson Appointment Form (Submit to Dept HQs) | June 1 st |
| Attend Department Convention | TBD |
| PROGRAMS TO WORK ON ALL YEAR | |
| Achieve Membership Goals | on-going |
| Support & Attend Department Recruiting Events | on-going |
| Donate and Support Commander's/President's Special Projects | on-going |
| Publications Contest (Post Newsletter, Social Media, Community Service Books) | on-going |
| Veterans in the Classroom | on-going |
| Support SD VFW Baseball | on-going |
| Americanism | on-going |
| Report all Community Service activities to State Dashboard | on-going |

The VFW National Headquarters staff is ready and trained to answer any questions you may have concerning Membership, VFW programs, or other issues. You can contact the **Member Service Center directly at 1.833.VFW.VETS**, or the **Membership Department at 1.888.JOIN.VFW**.

Membership Goals/Objectives

1. Achieve 100%+1 member by Retaining annual members, Replacing deceased members, and Recruiting new, active, members.
2. All Posts achieve 90% retention of continuous members.
3. All Posts achieve 90% life memberships.
4. Use every community event as a positive recruitment engagement.
5. Strive to achieve 95% membership by New Year's Day to ensure overall success.
6. Embrace and welcome all worthy Veterans.
7. Encourage cooperation between Post and Auxiliary recruitment events.
8. Refocus the image of the VFW to a family-friendly and modern environment.

The Membership Program is a Post program. Offer incentives or discounts, get creative!

❖ We are only as strong as our Membership Status!!



Top Recruiter

The Member who signs up the most new, new life, or reinstated members will receive an incentive (TBD). State Headquarters will use information from the National Monthly Recruiter Report. **Cutoff date May 1st.**

Commander's Recruiting Challenge

State Commander Vanden Hoek challenges every Post to increase membership by 5%

Months/Percentages to reach Membership Goal

-  Jan 1 – obtain 95%
-  May 1 – obtain 100%+1

Membership Categories

Posts in the Department of South Dakota have been divided into four (4) Membership Categories. These Categories will be used to determine the All-State Teams for Post Commander and Post Quartermaster. The value of the Post's donations/obligations will be assigned by these categories.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Category 1 (Total: 15) <50</p> <p>Alcester Armour Chamberlain Elk Point Eureka Flandreau Goodwin Lake Andes Lemmon Marty Miller Quinn/Wall Turton Tyndall Wessington Springs</p> | <p>Category 2 (Total: 14) 50-100</p> <p>Belle Fourche Beresford Britton Burke Canton Gettysburg Newell Parkston Plankinton Redfield Scotland Vermillion Webster Winner</p> <p>Category 3 (Total: 9) 101-200</p> <p>Brandon Brookings Huron Madison Milbank Sisseton Spearfish Sturgis Wagner</p> | <p>Category 4 (Total: 9) >200</p> <p>Aberdeen Custer Deadwood Mitchell Pierre Rapid City Sioux Falls Watertown Yankton</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Department Total: 47 Posts</p> |
|---|---|---|

All-State Post Commander & Post Quartermaster Teams and the Baker-Simpson & William J. Radigan Awards Requirements

The Posts that achieve All-State Post Commander and Post Quartermaster will be recognized at the Department Convention by the Commander. Posts must complete the following criteria by **May 1st**. All Posts that achieve All-State recognition will be allowed to purchase their All-State Post Commander and Quartermaster white hats. The Top Post in each category will make up the Department's All-State Teams. The Baker-Simpson & William J. Radigan Awards will be awarded to the top Post in the Department. This contest is open to all Post Commanders and Post Quartermasters in the Department of South Dakota and begins July 1st.

1. Must attain **100%+1 Member** based on Jun 30th of previous year's Membership Statistics (MemStats in OMS).
2. Attain a minimum of **80% Retention** of prior year's annual membership.
3. Must submit **Election Report** in OMS and Department Headquarters **NLT Jun 1**.
4. Purchase a **minimum 500 Poppies**. The Legacy Poppies and/or Tin Tab Poppies satisfy this requirement.
5. Must submit payment for all **Department Dues** (Hospital, Service & Rehab, Memorial Park) based on Post Membership from previous year to Department Headquarters **NLT September 31st**.
6. Must submit payment for all **Department Donations** (Recruitment, National Home, Special Olympics) based on Membership Category to Department Headquarters **NLT September 31st**. Category 1-\$20, Category 2-\$30, Category 3-\$50, Category 4-\$100.
7. All Four (4) **Quarterly Trustee Audit Reports** must be submitted to Department Headquarters (within 30 days from last day of quarter).
8. **Pay minimum \$25** to the **National Veteran Services (formerly VMS) Program**. Submit funds directly to the National's Programs Dashboard.
9. Submit **District Dues** to District Quartermaster based on Membership as of June (Previous year) **NLT District Fall meeting**.
10. Conduct a **VFW Day of Service** event during the month of May.
11. Submit minimum of one (1) **Community Service Report event Quarterly** to the State's Dashboard and achieve a **minimum of 5% increase** from the previous year's Community Service reporting.

All-State Post Commander and Post Quartermaster Teams

The following Point System has been devised to determine the outstanding Post Commander and Post Quartermaster in each Category who will comprise the All-State Teams. There may be up to **Four (4) White Hat Post Commanders (CO) and Four (4) White Hat Post Quartermasters (QM)** awarded. If a Membership Category does not qualify based on the established criteria, there will not be a White Hat awarded in that Category. For the Commander and Quartermaster with the highest points total after the four Categories, an additional **Two (2) At-Large White Hats** may be awarded for a total of up to **six (6) CO & QM White Hats**. The Commander receiving the most points will be awarded the **Baker-Simpson Award** and the Quartermaster receiving the most points will be awarded the **William J. Radigan Award**.

All-State Post Commanders and Post Quartermasters Awards & Prizes

1. All-State White Hat
2. All-State Pin
3. Registration to the Department Convention reimbursed
4. Room for 3 nights at Department Convention (IAW DEPT SOP)
5. Mileage to and from the Convention from your home (IAW DEPT SOP)
6. **Baker-Simpson Award** (Eagle Award) to Outstanding Commander
7. **William J. Radigan Award** (Eagle Award) to Outstanding Quartermaster

Breakdown of All-State Contest Points

Membership Division

(Per Membership Category, Post must meet all criteria to receive points)

| | <u>POINTS</u> |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Top five (5) Posts membership percentages in Memstats (200/150/100/75/50 (in order) | 200 max |
| 2. Twenty (20) points every additional 1% over the 100+1 Quota up to 200 | 200 max |
| 3. Posts achieving 95% retention | 200 max |
| 4. Ten points per reinstated member up to 40 members | 400 max |

Maximum Total Points: 1000

VFW Programs and Projects Division

Aid to Others/Hospital (20 per report, 100 max)
Americanism/Patriotism (20 per report, 100 max)
Citizenship Activities (20 per report, 100 max)
Community Involvement (20 per report, 100 max)
EMT (100 per/max)
Firefighter (100 per/max)
Law Enforcement (100 per/max)
Dispatcher (100 per/max)
Scout of Year (100 per/max)
Teacher of the Year (100 per category, 300 max)
Voice of Democracy (100 per/max)
Patriots Pen (100 per/max)
VMS bonus points, Minimum \$125 donation (100 max)
DPAA bonus points, Minimum \$75 donation (100 max)
Publications/Social Media/Community Service Program Book (100 max)
Veterans Day (100 max)
Memorial Day (100 max)
Loyalty Day (100 max)

Maximum Total Points: 2000

Attendance at Council of Administration & District Meetings

| | <u>POINTS</u> |
|--|---------------|
| 🔥 Fall Council of Administration (COA) | 50 |
| 🔥 Legislative Conference | 50 |
| 🔥 Fall District Meeting | 50 |
| 🔥 Winter District Meeting | 50 |
| 🔥 Spring District Meeting | 50 |

Bonus Points:

Each Post member that is not a member of the Department COA who attends any of the meetings listed above will receive the 50 points per meeting (200 max pts per meeting).

Maximum Total Points: 1000

Maximum Total Points - All-State Teams: 4000



All-State District Commanders Team Requirements

To be considered for the selection on the All-State District Commanders Team, you must complete the following criteria by **May 1st**. This contest is open to all District Commanders in the Department of South Dakota and begins **Jul 1st**.

1. **100%+1 in Membership.**
2. Must submit **Election Report** on National site **NLT June 1st**.
3. Each Post in your District shall purchase a minimum of **500 Poppies**.
4. **Inspection** of each Post must be conducted and forwarded to Department Headquarters **NLT January 1st**.
5. **Pay minimum \$100 in support of DPAA (Defense Personnel POW/MIA Accounting Agency)**. Submit funds to National's Programs Dashboard.
6. **One (1) Voice of Democracy entry** from District must advance to the Department Chairperson.
7. **One (1) Patriot's Pen entry** from District must advance to the Department Chairperson.
8. **One (1) Teacher of the Year Award entry** from any Post in the District must advance to Department Chairperson.
9. **One (1) School of Instruction (SOI)** must be conducted at a District meeting.
10. **Commander shall attend all COA and own District meetings**. Exceptions will only be granted by the State Commander.
11. Provide a **Book of Reports** for COA meetings.

The top two qualifying District Commanders receiving the most points will qualify for the All-State District Commanders Team and the Commander receiving the most points will be the Team Captain and will be awarded the **Tice-Gallagher Award**.

All-State District Commanders Awards & Prizes

1. All-State White Hat
2. Registration to the Department Convention reimbursed
3. Gift (TBD)
4. **Tice-Gallagher Award** to Outstanding District Commander

Breakdown of Contest Points

Membership

| <u>CATEGORY</u> | <u>POINTS</u> |
|---|----------------------|
| Membership percentages (1 st -300, 2 nd -200, 3 rd -100) | 0 – 300 |
| Ten points per member over quota up to 500 points | 0 - 500 |

Maximum Total Points: 800

Points in categories below will be awarded if 100% of Posts participate in the named program within the District.

| | <u>POINTS</u> |
|---|----------------------|
| Department Dues (NLT Sep 31 st) | 50 |
| Department Donations (NLT Sep 31 st) | 100 |
| NVS (National Program) (formerly VMS) | 100 |
| Public Servant of the Year (LE, Firefighter, EMT, Dispatcher) | 200 |
| Teacher of the Year | 200 |

Maximum Total Points: 650

Attendance

District Commander attendance at COA Meetings:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. First COA Meeting after Department Convention | 50 |
| 2. Fall COA Meeting | 50 |
| 3. Legislative COA Meeting | 50 |
| 4. Participation at Dept. Recruiting/Retention Events (i.e. State Fair or Sturgis Bike Rally, 50 per event) | 50-200 max |

Maximum Total Points: 350

Total Maximum Points All-State District: 1800

Notice:

Membership turn-in on the day of judging before judging time is scheduled with proper verification (copy of applications or renewal notices and copy of payment) is provided; they will be included in the membership totals. Also, all other reports or documents will be accepted before judging time is scheduled for other parts of the contest. This is for all contests and awards for Post Commanders, Post Quartermasters & District Commanders.

The Three (3) Awards listed below are selected exclusively by the State Commander. These awards, if selected, will be presented during the State Convention Banquet.

Double Eagle Award

To be considered for selection of the Double Eagle Award the Comrade must be a Past Department Commander or a Department Officer who has been instrumental in providing the Commander with guidance and counsel during his/her term.

Tice/Gallagher/Radigan (TGR) Award

To be considered for the TGR Award the Comrade must be a Life Member, have been a member of the VFW for at least ten (10) years, and active in VFW affairs.

Most Valuable Comrade (MVC) Award

May be awarded to anyone within the Department or Department Auxiliary for Exemplary Dedication and Service to the Department of South Dakota and Veterans.

100%+1 Award for Districts and Posts

All Districts and Posts that reach 100%+1 in Membership by May 1st will be awarded the Quota Buster award.

The award will be presented by the State Commander or by a delegated representative at the Department Convention or at another appropriate time.

Post Membership Award

Contest is for Posts who reach 100%+1 in Membership that was assigned to them by the Membership Committee. Cut-off date for this contest will be based on the members reported for each Post to National Headquarters Direct Dues Department on May 1st. The Department Commander may award the top 3 Posts with a Membership Post Quota Buster Plaque.





NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

CODE OF ETHICS

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Approved:

_____ Attest: _____
State Commander State Adjutant

DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

CODE OF ETHICS POLICY

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Department of South Dakota is a non-profit organization under the laws of the State of South Dakota. VFW members, affiliated organizations (including Posts), and the general public look to the VFW Department of South Dakota to provide strong leadership on veteran's issues and to develop and implement effective programs to promote patriotism, community service, youth development and a strong national defense. In order to fulfill those important responsibilities, the Department must maintain a reputation that is above reproach.

In order to sustain the organization's reputation and assure its continued success, officers, council members and employees, as well as members put in leadership positions (e.g. committee chairman and other appointees), are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and in accordance with the admonition in the Ritual to live lives of stainless integrity. To maintain the trust and confidence of the members, persons who donate to the organization and the public, the officers, council members, employees and others in leadership positions must adhere to the highest standards of honesty, integrity and professional conduct, and comply with the Code of Ethics.

This Policy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of South Dakota is intended to foster an environment that promotes ethical conduct in carrying out the mission of the organization by its leaders, volunteers and employees.

CODE OF ETHICS/POLICY STATEMENTS

Officers, council members, employees and other members in leadership positions in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of South Dakota shall be governed by the following Code of Ethics and Policy Statements:

PERSONAL CONDUCT AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

All officers, council members, employees, and other members in leadership positions shall:

1. Display personal integrity, avoid misrepresentation and always be honest with others;
2. Act in a professional manner at all times;
3. Promote an environment where honesty and open communication are valued;
4. Resolve differences of opinion in a professional and mature manner;
5. Respect the confidentiality of privileged information;
6. Refuse to engage in or tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment toward members, employees, volunteers or other officers;
7. Exhibit respect and fairness toward all people;
8. Speak highly of the organization and its members; and
9. Promote the VFW and support the activities of the organization.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Members and donors have placed their trust in the leadership of the organization to use funds to best fulfill the mission of the VFW. The officers, council members, employees and others in leadership positions shall:

1. Refrain from using VFW's resources for any purpose that does not benefit the organization;
2. Ensure that travel, entertainment and related expenses that are incurred on behalf of the VFW are for the benefit of the organization and not for personal gain or interests;
3. Make objective and informed decisions concerning the proper use of funds or assets of the organization; and
4. Regard the assets of the organization with the same consideration and same care as personal assets when making decisions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY STATEMENT

To avoid the appearance of a Conflict of Interest which would tarnish the image of the organization, no one serving as an officer, council member, employee or in any leadership position shall take personal advantage of his or her leadership role by allowing a situation to exist that is, or may be perceived to be, a Conflict of Interest. All officers, council members, employees and others in leadership positions must:

1. Make all decisions based upon the best interests of the VFW;
2. Refrain from the use of the VFW resources for personal gain;
3. Timely disclose any direct or indirect relationship with a person, or interest in a business or other entity, that may benefit from a decision in which they have a vote or over which they have an ability to influence;
4. Refrain from influencing the selection of vendors who are relatives, personal friends or persons who are affiliated with, employ or are employed by, a person with whom such officer, employee or other person in a leadership position has a personal or professional relationship;
5. Avoid any conduct that could directly or indirectly benefit the officer, employee or other person in a leadership position and refrain from using such positions, directly or indirectly, for private gain or to advance personal interest or that of any family member, personal friend or other person with whom a personal relationship exists;
6. Decline any extravagant gift, travel, entertainment, gratuity, favor or extraordinary discounts on merchandise in the performance of VFW duties from anyone, and, under no circumstances, should any of the aforementioned affect business decisions*; and
7. Avoid any situation that may have an appearance of a Conflict of Interest.

*Any officer, council member, employee or person in any leadership position who questions the appropriateness of the gift, travel, entertainment, favors or discounts must disclose it to the Department Commander or Adjutant.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY — DISCLOSED

When a Conflict of Interest is disclosed, the State Adjutant will determine whether a conflict exists. If the conflict concerns the State Adjutant, then the State Commander will determine whether a conflict exists. The Audit Committee will subsequently review the determination.

When a conflict is determined to exist, resolution of the matter may include:

1. Approving or disapproving any transaction or situation in question;
2. Requiring the individual to be recused from positions in which the conflict exists until there is no longer a conflict;
3. Requiring the individual to discontinue, reduce or modify her/his participation in the Council of Administration or other committees where the conflict exists.

WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY STATEMENT

A whistleblower, as defined in this policy, is an officer, council member, employee or member/volunteer of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States who reports an activity that he/she believes to be illegal or dishonest or in violation of the Bylaws or policies of the Department Organization. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the matter, other than making himself/herself reasonably comfortable so that the reported information is credible. Neither is the whistleblower responsible for determining fault or corrective measures, which is the responsibility of the appropriate officers and/or council members.

Examples of illegal or dishonest activities are violations of federal, state or local laws; requesting or accepting bribes, kickbacks or benefits from vendors, or other fraudulent financial reporting. Examples of violations of policies could be failure to accurately report on travel and reimbursement requests.

If an officer, council member, employee or member/volunteer has knowledge of such conduct, he/she may report it to the State Commander or State Adjutant. The officer, council member, employee or member/volunteer should base his/her allegations on credible information and use sound judgement to avoid baseless allegations. Intentionally making a false report of wrongdoing may subject the individual to discipline.

Whistleblower protections are provided in two important areas — confidentiality and against retaliation. Insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, identity may be disclosed in order to conduct a thorough investigation, comply with law or provide individuals with their legal rights. The VFW will not retaliate against a whistleblower. Any whistleblower who believes he/she has been subjected to retaliation must contact the State Commander or State Adjutant.

The right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include complete immunity for any personal wrongdoing in which the whistleblower participated.

EMPLOYEE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

The Department of South Dakota VFW Bylaws empower the State Adjutant with the responsibility of managing the State Headquarters and staff on a day-to-day basis. Any complaints that you might have must be first addressed to the State Adjutant. This policy dictates that your supervisor, the State Adjutant, be the first officer to address any employee issues. If the issue concerns unlawful behavior on the part of the State Adjutant, it may be addressed directly with the State Commander.

As such, all employees of the Department of South Dakota VFW who have a complaint will first address such complaint, in written form, to the State Adjutant. The State Adjutant will initially address the complaint and try to resolve the problem. If the State Adjutant's decision does not resolve the problem or the employee feels that the problem is not resolved, the employee may, in written form, request that the complaint be forwarded to the State Commander for his/her action/determination. If the employee is not satisfied by the determination of the State Commander, the State Commander will appoint an individual to act as an arbitrator. The decision of the arbitrator is final unless the employee feels the case merits action by a state or federal agency.

Except as described above employees will not discuss/forward any type of complaint to Department of South Dakota VFW Officers without first submitting it to the State Adjutant for his/her action. Failure to do this will result in immediate termination of employment.

CODE OF ETHICS/POLICY STATEMENTS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Department of South Dakota Veterans of Foreign Wars Code of Ethics and Policy Statements. I understand that I am responsible for adhering to the principles and standards defined in this Code and these Policies, including, specifically, those provisions concerning Conflicts of Interest. I am not aware of any interests or relationships that could rise to a Conflict of Interest or otherwise violate the Code of Ethics or Policy Statements. I will disclose any such interests or relationships as soon as I am aware of it. I confirm that I will conduct myself in accordance with the principles and standards of the Code and adhere to these Policy Statements.

Signature

Printed Name

Title

Date

****Failure to sign and return the Code of Ethics Policy will result in removal from office****