

LAVA LEDGER



AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2025, EDITION 15

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER JASON SEAL

Welcome to the latest edition of the Lava Ledger and I hope you have had a wonderful September.

I would like to first acknowledge our U.S. Air Force veterans as they celebrated their Service birthday on September 18th. The Department of Hawaii joins me in congratulating you on your 78th! We thank you for your sacrifice, we are grateful for your dedication, and all of us truly appreciate your patriotism. We salute the greatest Air Force in the world: Aim High!

An additional important date during the month was September 19th - National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Established in 1979 by presidential proclamation signed by President Carter, the day honors former prisoners of war and those missing in action from past and current conflicts. A dignified and appropriately solemn ceremony was held at Punchbowl National Ceremony where numerous luminaries attended: Ms Fern Winbush the Principal Deputy Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA); LTG Joel Vowell, Deputy Commanding General US Army Pacific; SgtMaj Allan Kellogg USMC, Medal of Honor; and Josh Green, the Governor of the State of Hawaii. Governor Green read the official State Proclamation reaffirming Hawaii's commitment to honoring those who were POWs and remembering those who never returned. Importantly, the Governor made note of the fact that 81,000 Americans still remain unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and other more recent conflicts. He also reminded the attendees that there are 153 Hawaiian Service members still missing and that the DPAA continues the effort to search for, repatriate, and identify our missing service members.

Lastly, but importantly, September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month - a time to raise awareness, connect people to resources, and normalize conversations about mental health. This important annual observation provides a timely opportunity to address the scourge of suicide. If you know of a veteran who is in crisis and may be contemplating suicide there are resources you can turn to for immediate help: 1) Phone 988 for Suicide and Crisis Lifeline then press 1 for veterans support; 2) Text LEV to 741741 to connect by text with a crisis counselor; 3) contact the Sparks Matsunaga VA Medical Center at 800-827-1000; or the West Oahu Mobile Vet Center at 808-674-2414; or the Daniel K. Akaka VA Clinic at 800-214-1306; or the Suicide Prevention Team, Pacific Islands at 808-433-3472. Help us look after our fellow veterans who may be struggling with mental health issues.

To all of you in the VFW Department of Hawaii - thank you for all that you do for our veterans. It is better to serve than to be served.

Semper Fidelis,
Jason Seal, Commander





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COMMAND POST



POST BENEFITS ADVISOR

Comrades,

At the 126th VFW National Convention, delegates approved an amendment to the National Bylaws that officially changes the title of Post Service Officer and District Service Officer to Benefits Advisor.

This change takes effect 30 days after the adjournment of the National Convention. All Departments, Districts, Posts, and VFW employees are directed to ensure this update is communicated throughout the organization and reflected in all correspondence, websites, forms, training materials, and other official documents going forward.

Key Points to Remember:

- The change affects title only; all existing materials remain valid and relevant until updates are made.
- Posts, Districts, and Departments are not required to immediately amend or resubmit their bylaws. National Bylaws always supersede local bylaws, so compliance is automatic.
- Please make the title change the next time your Post updates its bylaws.
- Accredited Veteran Service Officers remain at the Department level

Thank you for your attention and for helping maintain uniformity within our great organization.

HEALTH REMINDER

Comrades,

Foodborne illness impacts 1 in 6 Americans each year, leading to 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. Protect yourself and your family by following four key steps:

- Clean – Wash hands, surfaces, and produce thoroughly.
- Separate – Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Cook – Use a food thermometer; don't rely on color or texture.
- Chill – Refrigerate within 2 hours (1 hour if above 90°F).

Remember: Even fresh produce can carry germs like Salmonella and E. coli. Rinse fruits and vegetables carefully to reduce risk. Practicing these basics keeps our families and communities safe.

VFW NEWS

HONORING PRIVATE BRUNO R. ORIG: A HAWAII SON REMEMBERED

BY CHELSEA MACK
VFW DEPARTMENT OF HAWAII, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Department of Hawaii Veterans of Foreign Wars solemnly honors the life and sacrifice of Bruno R. Orig, a proud son of Hawai'i who gave his life in service to his country. His story, though marked by tragedy, is also one of extraordinary courage, duty, and love for the nation he swore to defend.

For many in Hawai'i, Orig's name may be unfamiliar. He did not return home from war. He left no descendants. There were no parades in his honor. For over 70 years, his story remained largely unknown. But in January 2025, that changed.

“

Now, we remember him...as a brother, a son,
and a true American hero whose courage and
sacrifice will never be forgotten.

”

In a ceremony at the White House, President Joe Biden posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor to Orig for his extraordinary heroism during the Korean War. It was a long-overdue recognition for a hero from O'ahu, whose actions on a frozen battlefield near Chipyong-ni saved the lives of his fellow soldiers at the cost of his own.

Now, we remember him—not just as a name etched on a memorial wall, but as a brother, a son, and a true American hero whose courage and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

A Local Boy, A Warrior's Path

Born in January 1930 in 'Ewa, O'ahu, Orig was one of nine siblings in a Filipino-American household rooted in service and resilience. His family's military tradition ran deep—his father, stepfather, and several brothers served across multiple conflicts including World War I, World War II, and Vietnam.

As a boy, Orig witnessed the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor. That moment left a deep impression, shaping his sense of duty and fueling his desire to serve. After graduating from Farrington High School in 1949, he enlisted in the United States Army in August 1950, just months after the outbreak of the Korean War. He was only 20 years old.

The Battle at Chipyong-ni

On February 15, 1951, Orig—only a Private at the time, serving with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division—was near the village of Chipyong-ni, a critical point in what would become one of the most strategically important battles of the Korean War.

That day, as the enemy launched a fierce and determined assault, Orig returned from a wire-laying mission to discover wounded comrades exposed to relentless fire. Without hesitation - and under extreme enemy pressure - he moved across open ground to render aid and carry the wounded to safety.



HONORING PRIVATE BRUNO R. ORIG: A HAWAII SON REMEMBERED

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He returned again and again to retrieve his wounded comrades, risking his life with every trip.

When he spotted a nearly overrun machine-gun position, with only one crew member left, Orig took over the post. He delivered sustained, effective fire, holding off the enemy long enough for a nearby platoon to withdraw without a single casualty.

Orig continued to fight until he was finally overrun and killed.

When U.S. forces retook the position later that day, they found Orig's body beside his weapon. He had held his ground. Around him lay the bodies of multiple enemy soldiers—a stark testament to the fierceness of his final stand.

A Family's Vigil, A Nation's Gratitude

Originally awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Orig's actions were revisited in 2021 as part of a broader Department of Defense review of military records, aimed at addressing historical discrimination in the awarding of medals to Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander service members.

As a result of that review, his decoration was upgraded. On January 3, 2025, President Joe Biden awarded Private Bruno R. Orig the Medal of Honor in a White House ceremony attended by Orig's family, including his 94-year-old sister, Loretta Orig, who accepted the award on his behalf.

"We always knew he was brave," she said. "But this... this means the world."

Never Forgotten

Private Orig is buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl), his name inscribed alongside thousands of others who made the ultimate sacrifice. But now, with the Medal of Honor as testament, his legacy rises from quiet memory into the full light of national recognition.

He was not a man seeking glory. He was a local boy—humble, faithful, and raised to serve. His bravery under fire speaks not only to his strength but to the countless others from Hawai'i who served with honor and courage, often without the recognition they deserved.

Now, at last, Private Bruno R. Orig takes his rightful place among the heroes of this nation. May we never again let his story go untold.



Hawaii Representation on the National Stage

At the 126th VFW National Convention in Columbus, Ohio, Commander-in-Chief Carol L. Whitmore assumed command of our organization. Hawaii is honored to be represented on the National Council of Administration by Comrade Ron H. Schaedel Sr., Post 10276 (Honolulu). His role ensures that the voice of our veterans here in Hawaii continues to be heard at the highest levels of the VFW.

General Orders – What This Means for Hawaii Posts

General Orders No. 1 reaffirm several priorities that directly affect our Department and local Posts:

- All Posts are expected to participate in Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, Buddy Poppy, and Veterans & Military Support Programs this year. Hawaii has a strong tradition of success in these programs, and we encourage every Post to continue leading by example.
- Commanders and Trustees are reminded to keep audits and IRS filings current. These reports protect our Posts and our Department, ensuring accountability and transparency.
- Veterans Day is approaching, and now is the time for Hawaii Posts to begin planning local observances and outreach events.

Membership Challenge – Hawaii Can Lead the Way

The new membership year has launched with the Commander's Challenge, encouraging every member to recruit at least one new comrade and mentor them. Posts can earn points for each new or upgraded member, with recognition given quarterly and at the National Convention.

Hawaii has consistently proven itself in membership drives—now is the time to carry that energy forward, especially by engaging new veterans and younger leaders.

Programs and Community Engagement

- The Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen themes for 2025-26 are both: "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support For Our Country?" Posts should begin contacting schools and youth programs now to ensure strong participation from Hawaii's students.
- Buddy® Poppies are a year-round effort. Every time we gather in the community—whether at parades, school programs, or veterans events—Poppies should be visible as a reminder of our fallen comrades.
- The Department encourages all Hawaii Posts to submit nominations for the VFW National Public Servant Awards (Law Enforcement, Firefighter, EMT, 911 Dispatcher, and EOD Technician). Recognizing Hawaii's first responders not only honors their service but also strengthens ties between our Posts and local communities.

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

Since the renewal of recovery efforts in the 1970s, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has brought closure to thousands of families. More than one thousand Americans lost during World War II have been identified and returned to their loved ones, in addition to the hundreds of thousands whose remains were recovered in the immediate aftermath of the war. From the Korean War, approximately 450 service members have been identified since 1982, adding to the two thousand who were accounted for in the years following the armistice. Today, fewer than 7,500 remain unaccounted for from Korea, though many are believed to be in a non-recoverable category.

The Vietnam War also continues to weigh heavily on our nation's conscience. Since 1973, the remains of more than one thousand Americans have been identified and returned to their families, yet around 1,600 remain unaccounted for, with hundreds determined to be non-recoverable. More recent conflicts are not forgotten either. The DPAA continues to pursue cases in the Middle East, including five individuals still missing from Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom, and one service member lost during Operation El Dorado Canyon in Libya in 1986.



POW/MIA Recognition Day is not only about numbers, but about the solemn promise that no American who served and sacrificed will be forgotten. Each identification represents a family receiving long-awaited closure and a hero being laid to rest with full military honors.

Here in Hawaii, we can support this mission and honor our missing by flying the black POW/MIA flag on September 19 and by attending or hosting ceremonies in remembrance. It is our duty to continue saying their names, sharing their stories, and standing by the promise that they will never be forgotten.



DOWN RANGE



Honoring Nisei Veterans: Annual Joint Memorial Service at Punchbowl

Each year, on the Sunday closest to September 29, the Joint Memorial Service is held at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) to honor the bravery and sacrifice of Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) soldiers who served during World War II.

This solemn ceremony pays tribute to members of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Military Intelligence Service (MIS), and the 1399th Engineer Construction Battalion—units known for their extraordinary courage and service. The date holds special significance, commemorating Sgt. Shigeo “Joe” Takata, the first Nisei soldier killed in action on September 29, 1943.

Open to the public, the Joint Memorial Service serves as a powerful reminder of the legacy and heroism of these decorated veterans, ensuring their stories continue to inspire future generations.

VFW Honors Heroes: POW/MIA Remembrance Day at Punchbowl:

An image from the recent POW/MIA Remembrance Day Ceremony at Punchbowl National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, where members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) gathered to pay tribute. Pictured (left to right) are Stan Fernandez, Lynn Mariano, Jason Seal, Fred Chang, and Peter Mottas, standing together in remembrance of those who remain missing in action and those who were prisoners of war.



Honoring the Fallen:

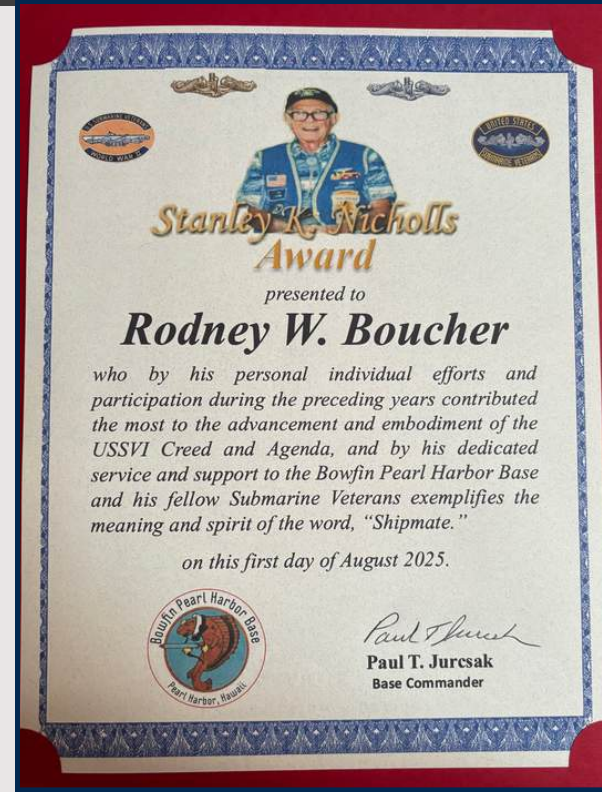
Dignified Transfer at Punchbowl Cemetery
A solemn moment captured during a recent Dignified Transfer and disinterment ceremony at Punchbowl National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. In attendance were comrades Stan Fernandez, Fred Chang, and Adriel Lam, who stood in tribute to the service and sacrifice of our nation's heroes.



Comrade Recognized for Outstanding Service:

Rodney Boucher, Department of Hawaii Junior Vice Commander and VSO-in-training with Post 12138, was recently honored by the United States Submarine Veterans Bowfin Base for his outstanding community service as a Submarine Veteran during the 2024–2025 year.

The award citation was formally presented on August 29th by Post 12138 Commander Greg Agonoy during the monthly Post meeting, recognizing Comrade Boucher's dedication to both the veteran and Submarine communities.





Recognizing the Civil Air Patrol:

At the August 29th meeting of Post 12138, Department Commander Jason Seal had the privilege of presenting Certificates of Appreciation to the cadets in recognition of their service in support of the 4th of July Parade in Kailua.

Commander Seal also expressed his gratitude for the Wing's ongoing support of the VFW and met with CAP Wing Commander, Colonel Haraguchi, to further strengthen the relationship between the organizations.

The accompanying photos show Commander Seal presenting the certificates to the cadets, a small gesture of thanks for their continued partnership and dedication.

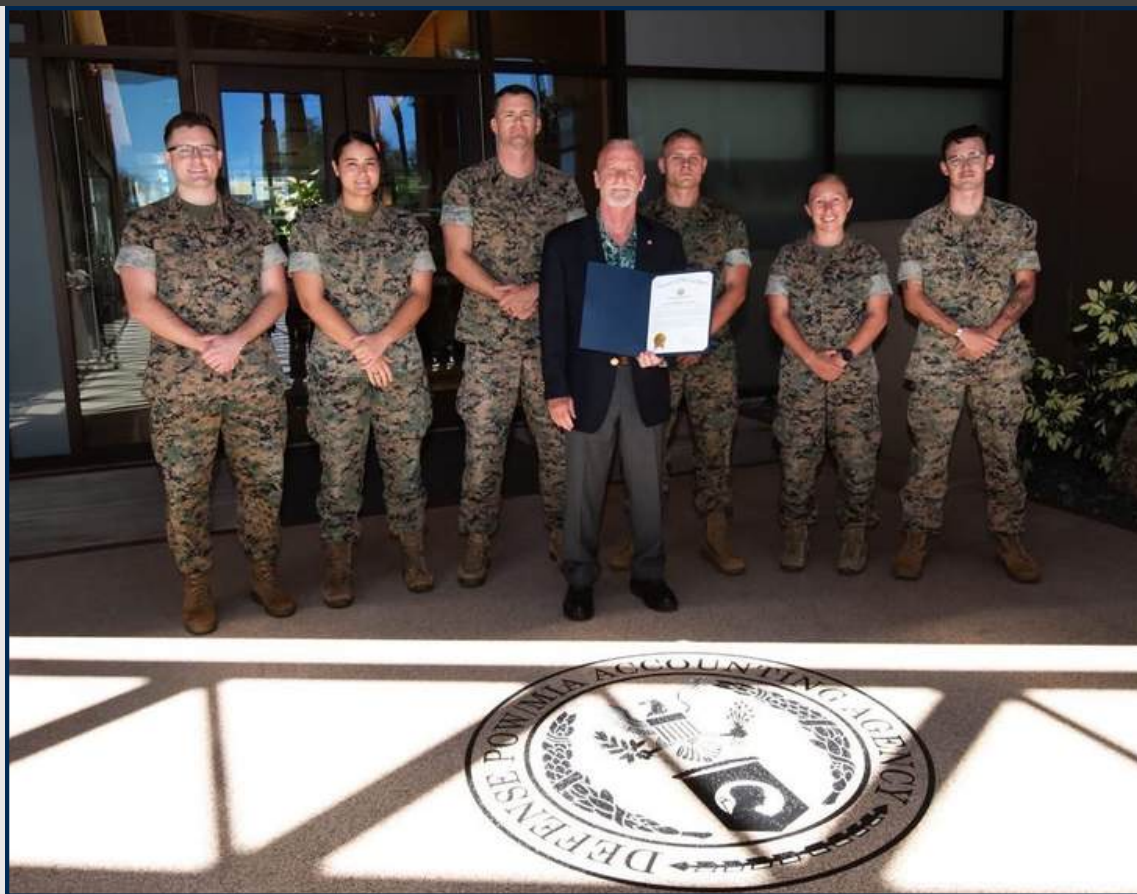


Special Olympics:

Comrade Stan Fernandez, a dedicated member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, joined forces with the Knights of Columbus this past weekend to help prepare and serve more than 500 meals for Special Olympics participants and staff. His commitment to service exemplifies the VFW spirit of giving back to both veterans and the broader community. Mahalo to Stan and all who volunteered to make this event a success.

Honoring Excellence

Department Commander Jason Seal proudly presented our Junior Vice Commander with his All-State Cap on Saturday, July 12, 2025, following a successful day of training. The moment captured the pride of achievement and the spirit of teamwork that drives our Department forward.



Honoring the Mission of the DPAA:

Department Commander Jason Seal and his wife recently toured the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency at Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam. The visit included briefings with forensic professionals and a chance to learn more about the agency's mission to account for missing service members from World War II to the present.

At the end of the tour, Commander Seal presented a VFW Certificate of Appreciation to the DPAA staff and was honored with a sendoff by the detachment of Marines assigned to the command, underscoring the shared commitment to ensuring that America's missing are never forgotten.





Blue Angels Air Show 2025:

We would like to thank Comrade Gregory S. Agonoy, Commander of VFW Post 12138, along with all the other volunteers and VFW members who helped make the VFW booth at the 2025 Blue Angels Air Show a success.

Together, comrades welcomed new members, reinstated expired ones, assisted with transfers to Hawaii, and shared valuable information with veterans and their families — showing the strength of the VFW Hawaii team in action.





POST

MEETINGS



Post 94: Oahu Veteran's Center (OVC), 1298 Kukila St. in Honolulu. Meeting every 1st Saturday of the month at 0900 hours.

Post 110: OVC, 1298 Kukila St. in Honolulu. Meeting every last Thursday of the month at 1200 hours.

Post 352: First Baptist Church, 1233 California Ave in Wahiawa. Meeting every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 1800 hours.

Post 849: Pililaau Army Recreation Center, 86-010 Army St. in Waianae. Meeting every 2nd Wednesday of the month at 1800

Post 970: OVC, 1298 Kukila St. in Honolulu. Meeting every 2nd Thursday of the month at 1900 hours.

Post 1540: Sacred Hearts Academy Library, 3253 Waialae Ave in Honolulu. Meeting every 1st Wednesday of the month at 1830 hours.

Post 1572: Hawaiian Plantation Village, 94-695 Waipahu St. in Waipahu. Meeting every 1st Saturday of the month at 1000 hours.

Post 2875: OVC, 1298 Kukila St. in Honolulu. Meeting every last Saturday of the month at 0930 hours.

Post 3292: OVC, 1298 Kukila St. in Honolulu. Meeting every 1st Saturday of the month at 0900 hours.

Post 3391: American Samoa Veterans Memorial, Ottoville Rd. Equator Building in Pago Pago. Meeting every 3rd Saturday of the month at 1000 hours.

Post 3830: Post 3830, 15-775 Maluhia Rd. in Pahoa. Meeting every 2nd Saturday of the month at 1100 hours.

Post 3850: Wilber Tom Post, 1136 Uluniu Rd. in Kihei. Meeting every 1st Saturday of the month at 1300 hours.

Post 3855: Kauai Veterans Center, 3215 Kauai Veterans Memorial Hwy., Ste H in Lihue. Meeting every 4th Wednesday of the month at 1730 hours.

Post 3870: Molokai Veterans Center, 81 Kaunakakai Pl. in Kaunakakai. Meeting every 2nd Saturday of the month at 1000 hours.

Post 3875: Kamana Senior Center, 127 Kamana St. in Hilo. Meeting every 3rd Saturday of the month at 0900 hours.

Post 8616: Elks Lodge 616, 2933 Kalakaua Ave in Honolulu. Meeting every 1st Saturday of the month at 0945 hours.

Post 10154: The Clipper Club at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, 44-245 Kaneohe Bay Dr. in Kaneohe. Meeting every 3rd Saturday of the month at 1000 hours.

Post 10276: OVC, 1298 Kukila St. in Honolulu. Meeting every 3rd Saturday of the month at 1000 hours.

Post 12122: Kailua-Kona Post, 74-5543 Kaiwi St. in Kailua-Kona. Meeting every 2nd Saturday of the month at 1130 hours.

Post 12138: Barbers Point Bowling Center, 91-1259 Saratoga Ave in Kapolei. Meeting every last Saturday of the month at 1000 hours.



ACTION CORPS



VFW ACTION CORPS: SIGN UP NOW!



The VFW Action Corps is a national grassroots advocacy network of over 300,000 VFW members and supporters dedicated to veterans' issues. They stay informed on challenges facing veterans, the military, and their families, and are ready to take action by contacting lawmakers. Open to all patriotic Americans, the Action Corps is free to join and helps amplify the voices of veterans' advocates across the country.

MEMBERS RECEIVE:

- The VFW Action Corps Weekly newsletter, covering advocacy efforts.
- Access to contact information for elected officials nationwide.
- Regular "Action Alerts" to engage when veterans' issues require attention.

The VFW Action Corps strengthens the VFW's mission to support veterans, working closely with the National Legislative Service in Washington, D.C., to drive change.

RECENT LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES INCLUDE:

- The PACT Act, expanding VA healthcare for veterans exposed to toxic substances.
- The SERVICE Act, improving VA mammogram eligibility.
- Reforms to the Uniform Code of Military Justice on sexual assault and harassment.
- VA's maternity care coordination program for women veterans.
- The PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act, providing service dogs for veterans with PTSD.
- Inclusion of bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism as presumptive conditions for herbicide exposure.
- The Deborah Sampson Act, addressing healthcare barriers for women veterans.
- Removal of the 12-year limit on using Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) benefits.



JOIN THE VFW ACTION CORPS TODAY, OR ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO
DO SO, AND BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT MAKING A DIFFERENCE
FOR VETERANS.

TO SIGN UP, VISIT:
[HTTPS://VOTERVOICE.NET/VFW/REGISTER](https://votervoicenet/vfw/register)



ANNOUNCEMENTS



DEPARTMENT WEBSITE: A CENTRAL RESOURCE FOR ALL MEMBERS

All members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Hawaii—including those across the Hawaiian Islands, American Samoa, and other affiliated territories—are encouraged to utilize the Department's official website as a primary source of information.

The site provides access to essential forms, official communications, program updates, leadership contacts, event calendars, and resources for both Posts and individual members.

To remain informed and mission-ready, please visit:
www.vfwhi.org

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Posts are encouraged to share information regarding upcoming events, fundraisers, service projects, and community outreach activities for inclusion in future editions of the Lava Ledger.

We also welcome event summaries, photographs, and highlights of recent initiatives to help showcase the continued efforts and impact of our membership across the Department.

Please send all submissions to:
chelsea.mack@gmail.com

Content may be edited for clarity and space. Mahalo for helping us share the important work being done throughout the Department of Hawaii and its affiliated Posts.