



LAVA LEDGER



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Talofa Comrades,

Welcome to the December edition of the Lava Ledger! This month, we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior and embrace the Christmas season with gratitude and joy.

We proudly inaugurated the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) Office at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, enabling service members to apply for VA disability benefits before separation, ensuring a smooth transition to civilian life.

Special thanks to Congressman Ed Case for championing the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, which reduces prescription drug costs, strengthens Medicare, increases Social Security, and enhances protections for our community. His steadfast advocacy for veterans and their families is invaluable.

This month, we honor Comrade Maria Igafo Vaa Togia as our Comrade of the Month. A former Department Commander and current VFW Post 3391 Commander, Maria played a pivotal role in the Western Region Conference's success. As an Accredited Veteran Service Officer for American Samoa and the department's leading recruiter, her unwavering dedication exemplifies our mission. Fa'afetai tele lava, Maria!

Congratulations to the 2025 Voice of Democracy (VOD) and Patriots Pen (PP) winners:

- Lariah Trevenen-Ferreira, Kailua Intermediate School, sponsored by VFW Post 2875 - First Place Patriots Pen
- Makoa Arnett-Cook, Henry J. Kaiser High School, sponsored by VFW Post 1540 - First Place Voice of Democracy

These outstanding students will represent Hawaii in Washington, D.C., competing for the \$35,000 scholarship. We wish them every success!

VFW Post 3830's Christmas feed, in partnership with The Rotary Club of Hilo and their Satellite Military Club, the Rotary Club of South Hilo, and American Legion Post 3, exemplified the spirit of the season. Festive meals, gifts for children, and the generosity of the Rotary Clubs of East Hawaii, Costco, Safeway, Lex Brodie, and Chelsea Mack Realty made this event a heartfelt celebration of community and love. Mahalo to all who contributed to this meaningful event.

As we celebrate Christmas, let's carry our spirit of giving throughout the year. Our veterans deserve our unwavering support every day. Until next month stay healthy, positive and ready to support our precious veterans!

Fa'afetai ma ia faatasi le Atua,

Ben Fuata
Commander
VFW Dept. of Hawai'i



VFW NATIONAL NEWS

VFW OPENS HAWAII PRE-DISCHARGE CLAIMS OFFICE

*THIS ARTICLE WAS
PUBLISHED IN THE NOV/DEC
EDITION OF THE VFW
MAGAZINE

[Recently the] VFW held a grand opening ceremony for a pre-discharge claims office that aims to aid military service members leaving the military.

VFW pre-discharge representatives help military personnel navigate the VA claims process. They help prepare and submit necessary forms and evidence to the VA before the individual separates from active duty. Additionally, they offer information and answer questions regarding VA benefits and entitlements. VFW pre-discharge sites help with:

- Claims assistance
- Form preparation
- Information and guidance
- Pre-separation counseling



From left, VFW Pre-Discharge Representative Charles Tibbets, National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli and Navy Capt. Samuel White, commander of Hawaii's Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for VFW's new pre-discharge center near Honolulu.

VFW pre-discharge sites are designed to facilitate a smooth transition for service members from active duty to veteran status. They aid in accessing VA benefits and support, ensuring that service members receive the entitlements they are eligible for promptly upon completing their service.

The VFW encourages all military members who are planning to leave the military within 180 days to contact a VFW pre-discharge representative. Visit <https://www.vfw.org/assistance/va-claims-separation-benefits/pre-discharge-locations-and-contacts> to find one nearby.

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

KAPUNA REPORT

FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL
OFFICE OF ED CASE

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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December 2024

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:
DEFENSE

HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL
RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEES:

INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT

INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

WATER, WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

Our Hawai'i has one of the highest percentages of residents age 65+, and our kūpuna community continues to grow. I report to you again on some of my related efforts in Congress, and offer to assist you however I can.

Lowering Prescription Drug Costs. Because of 2022's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which I strongly supported, starting in January 2026 the costs of several key prescription medicines for those on Medicare will be reduced for the first time ever. More about what drugs will have lower costs is at www.LowerDrugCosts.gov.

Medicare Cost Savings Coming Soon. Also through the IRA, Congress imposed a \$2,000/yr. cap on out-of-pocket drug costs for Medicare prescription drug plan enrollees. You can also sign up for a monthly payment plan for these costs.

Protecting Social Security. The Social Security Administration announced a 2.5% cost-of-living increase in benefits for 2025 following 2024's 3.2% increase. While inflation has eased, this increase is still not enough for too many. To help, I cosponsored the Social Security 2100 Act to assure the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund while improving benefits, and through my Appropriations Committee we are providing over \$1 billion/year for Senior Nutrition Programs for those needing more help.

Helping You And Yours. Please contact me anytime at ed.case@mail.house.gov or 808-650-6688 if we can provide further information or assistance. More info: www.case.house.gov or scan this code.

I remain committed to the health and welfare of you and your 'ohana, and wish you the best of the holiday season.

Ed Case

Scan this code to go to my website >
case.house.gov



We Are Here To Help You

Email: ed.case@mail.house.gov • Website: case.house.gov

DC Phone: (202) 225-2726 • HI Phone: (808) 650-6688

VFW POST 3391 COMRADE OF THE MONTH

COMRADE MARIA IGAFO VAA TOGIA - A FIERCE ADVOCATE AND UNWAVERING LEADER FOR VETERANS EVERYWHERE

We are honored to recognize Maria Igafo Vaa Togia as our Comrade of the Month. As the Commander, Quartermaster, and Adjutant of her Post, Maria is a true embodiment of what it means to serve and support Veterans.

Her contributions go beyond her titles. Maria is a top recruiter, bringing new members into the fold and strengthening the future of our organization. As a Veteran Service Officer, she stands as a fierce advocate for those in need, ensuring every veteran receives the support they have earned.

Unforgettable and powerful—she's often the loudest voice in the room, but always with a purpose: to stand up for what's right and to protect those who might not have the ability or confidence to speak for themselves. Her unwavering commitment to her comrades and their well-being is something to be admired.

Maria's creativity and attention to detail recently shone in her design of the State Commander's shirt—a challenging task given his strong opinions! Her effort reflects her commitment to excellence and her desire to support her comrades in every possible way.

Her ability to go above and beyond has made her an indispensable part of the VFW family. Maria Igafo Vaa Togia exemplifies the spirit of service, advocacy, and camaraderie that defines the Veterans of Foreign Wars. She is not just an amazing comrade; she is an inspiration to us all.

Thank you, Maria, for your unwavering commitment and dedication!



VFW DEPARTMENT OF HAWAII ANNOUNCES: PATRIOT'S PEN AND VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNERS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE STATE WINNERS!

Patriot's Pen

- First Place: Lariah Trevenen-Ferreira (Post 2875, Kailua Intermediate School)
- Second Place: Reese Bailey (Post 970, Kailua Intermediate School)
- Third Place: Rielle Tokunaga (Post 1540, Sacred Hearts Academy)

Voice of Democracy

- First Place: Makoa Arnett-Cook (Post 1540, Henry J. Kaiser High School)
- Second Place (tie): Sydnee Erbschole (Post 3292, Hawaiian Academy of Arts/Kea'au High School)
- Second Place (tie): Olga Lehua Arianoff (Post 970, St. Joseph School)

WINNERS MOVED TO DEPARTMENT LEVEL JUDGING

Patriot's Pen

- Post 110: Collin Nixdorf (Kailua Intermediate School)
- Post 352: Shazelle Mitsui (Windward Nazarene Academy)
- Post 849: Maximus Dijos (Windward Nazarene Academy)
- Post 970: Reese Bailey (Kailua Intermediate School), Tymofii Babinskyi (Kailua Intermediate School)
- Post 1540: Rielle Tokunaga (Sacred Hearts Academy), Gianne Blanco (Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School)
- Post 1572: Myra Cabuslay (Our Lady of Good Counsel)
- Post 10154: Mila Hart, Liam Slusher (Kailua Intermediate School)
- Post 10276: Kiana Medeiros-Riveria (Our Lady of Good Counsel)
- Post 12138: Kherington Morris (Kanu O' Ka Aina PCS, Keeau, HI - Remote)
- Post 2875: Lariah Trevenen-Ferreira (Kailua Intermediate School)
- Post 3292: Juliet Connel (Kailua Intermediate School), Kiseki Higa (Windward Nazarene Academy)
- Post 3391: Konoske Jones (Kailua Intermediate School)
- Post 3830: Preston Donegan (Kailua Intermediate School)
- Post 3850: Keila Kahiapo (Windward Nazarene Academy)
- Post 3855: Ahmelia Watanabe (Windward Nazarene Academy)
- Post 8616: Kenzie Hergenreter (Seven Arrow Hill Prep)

Voice of Democracy

- Post 94: Jayci Kawaguchi (Mililani High School)
- Post 110: Maddison Miyasato (Waipahu High School)
- Post 849: Elijah Taylor (Moanalua High School)
- Post 970: Olga Lehua Arianoff (St. Joseph School)
- Post 1540: Ethan Yang, Makoa Arnett-Cook (Henry J. Kaiser High School)
- Post 1572: Tresyn Molina (Kamehameha Schools)
- Post 10154: Caleb White (Home School, Kaneohe, HI)
- Post 10276: Dejahlynn Ramos (Aiea High School)
- Post 12138: Andrew Agustin (Kapolei High School)
- Post 2875: Emma Maldarelli (Punahou)
- Post 3292: Sydnee Erbschole (Hawaiian Academy of Arts/Kea'au High School)
- Post 3391: Leila Carson (Hanalani Schools)
- Post 3830: Cheizyn Montizar (Kamehameha Schools)
- Post 3850: Ian Booker (King Kekaulike)
- Post 8616: Cailee Hergenreter (Seven Arrow Hill Prep)

VFW DEPARTMENT OF HAWAII STRENGTHENS BONDS AT VETERANS AFFAIRS COUNCIL LUNCHEON



In a display of camaraderie and international solidarity, the VFW Department of Hawai'i participated in a distinguished luncheon hosted by the Veterans Affairs Council (VAC) of the Republic of China (R.O.C.) on December 11, 2024. Held at Legends Seafood Restaurant in Honolulu, the event showcased mutual respect and a shared commitment to supporting veterans.

The senior officer attending on behalf of the VAC was Lt. Gen. Chin-Kung Cen, Vice Minister of the VAC, who led a delegation of approximately 14 individuals. The delegation included members of the R.O.C. Overseas Community Affairs Council, Taiwanese veterans, and two additional Taiwanese flag officers.

The VFW Department of Hawai'i stood as the sole U.S. Veterans Service Organization in attendance, making our presence not only significant but a meaningful representation of American support for international veteran communities. Representing the VFW were comrades George Barlett and Jason Seal.

Despite language barriers, assisted by the aid of an interpreter, the luncheon fostered warm and engaging conversations between the VFW representatives and the VAC delegation.

As the event concluded, Lt. Gen. Cen was honored with a special presentation from the VFW Hawaii team. He was gifted a VFW coin, symbolizing the enduring bond between the two organizations, and a VFW lapel pin, which he proudly wore on his shirt collar.

This event marks another step in strengthening the relationship between the VFW Department of Hawaii and the VAC, highlighting the importance of collaboration and mutual respect in honoring those who have served.



VFW POST 3830'S HOLIDAY FEED

On December 23, 2024, VFW Post 3830 in Pahoehoe became a beacon of holiday spirit as it hosted the Veteran and First Responder Holiday Feed. Spearheaded by the Post and its Auxiliary, the event united over 100 community members, veterans, first responders, and their families for an afternoon of camaraderie, delicious food, and festive cheer.

The event underscored the pivotal role VFW Post 3830 plays in fostering community connection. Both the Post and its Auxiliary worked tirelessly to create a welcoming and meaningful experience for all attendees. Their efforts were bolstered by a network of community partners, including the Rotary Club of Hilo, Rotary Club of South Hilo, Lex Brodie's Tires Company Hilo, Costco Kona, Safeway Hilo, Ohana Tattoo Company, TNT Tattoo Company, Chelsea Mack Realty, and other generous supporters.

Guests were treated to a hearty turkey dinner, made possible by Safeway's discounted pricing and the generosity of local sponsors. Volunteers served meals with care, while DJ Al Moreno and the American Legion Post 3 Band provided lively entertainment, setting the tone for a joyous celebration.

The event also highlighted the spirit of giving. Community donations ensured that every child in attendance received a present, bringing smiles to young faces and easing financial burdens for families during a challenging holiday season.

The Veteran and First Responder Holiday Feed exemplified VFW Post 3830's commitment to its mission of honoring and supporting those who serve. The event not only celebrated the holiday season but also strengthened the bonds within the community, showcasing the power of unity and shared gratitude.

With their unwavering dedication, VFW Post 3830 and its Auxiliary demonstrated what it means to embody the spirit of aloha, leaving a lasting impression on veterans, first responders, and their families this holiday season.



VFW POST 3830'S HOLIDAY FEED





LAVA LEDGER ANNOUNCEMENTS



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)



LAVA LEDGER ANNOUNCEMENTS



IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS:

VFW Dept. of Hawai'i Homecoming

Date: February 7, 2025

Location: Natsunoya Tea House, Honolulu, Oahu

(Seats are limited, so please contact Randy Grant if you'd like to attend)

87th Annual VFW & 66th Auxiliary State Convention

Date: June 12th-16th

Location: Kilauea Military Camp, Volcano National Park,
Big Island

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Share your upcoming Post events, fundraisers, service projects, and community activities with us to be featured in an upcoming edition of the Lava Ledger.

We also welcome summaries of events and photos for publication, so don't hesitate to send them our way!

Email your information to:
chelsea.mack@gmail.com