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VFW National Representative



Vincent "B.J." Lawrence

Vincent "B.J." Lawrence was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on July 25, 2018, at the 119th VFW National Convention in Kansas City, Mo.

B.J. served with the United States Army from 1983 to 1986, earning his VFW eligibility by serving in Korea, where he earned the Korean Defense Service Medal.

Upon joining VFW Post 7686 in Alamogordo, NM in 2000, he immediately began to dedicate his efforts toward moving the organization forward into the new millennium and beyond. He has proven to be a highly effective and dynamic leader, serving in a myriad of critical leadership positions, to include being elected to command his Post, District and the VFW Department of New Mexico, as well as serving on the National Appeals Committee, and as Vice Chairman of the National Legislative Committee. He was also elected to the VFW National Council of Administration in 2009.

During the 2010 VFW National Convention, he joined the ranks of a select few when he was recognized for his distinctive membership recruiting achievements on the Post, District and Department levels by earning the coveted designation of "VFW Triple Crown Winner."

B.J. attended the New Mexico State Law Enforcement Academy, New Mexico Firefighters Academy, and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration Narcotics Enforcement School. He served his community as a police officer for several years, including time as an undercover agent. Prior to his retirement in 2015, he was a private investigator and owner of Lawrence Investigations.

In 2008 he became a Gold Legacy Life member. He is also a life member of the VFW National Home for Children and the Military Order of the Cootie.

B.J. and his wife, Mary, reside in Alamogordo, NM.

B.J. is now the President of Combat Impact Outdoors a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to helping our combat veteran community enjoy the great outdoors and improve their mental health and well-being. Combat Impact Outdoors is the recipient of this years Department of New Mexico Special Project. Click the icon for more info.





Commander's Message



Brian Ravak

Comrades and Auxiliary, Well, we are off and running! The VFW National Convention is behind us. Commander in Chief Al Lippardht has taken the helm of the National Veterans of Foreign Wars, and our School of Instruction, aka Flying Squadron Training, is under our belt. I can't be more pleased with all the work that is happening across our state helping our veterans. It will take character, commitment, courage, and integrity

(3CI) for us to be successful while serving our veterans.

The Department President and I have selected Combat Impact Outdoors (CIO) as our Special Project for this year. We've set a lofty goal to raise \$32,000 to help fund eight all-inclusive hunting or fishing trips for veterans. CIO is focused on serving our veterans, while ensuring they receive mental health care and their VA entitlements. Please help me and Madam President Renee King reach our goal.

Also, please welcome comrade Mack Dyer as our newly elected State Junior Vice Commander. I have full confidence that Mack will represent our Department with the highest level of professionalism and integrity. Welcome Mack! Mack replaced Gary Logsdon, who needed to step down for personal reasons. I want to express my gratitude to Gary and his wife, Angelia Valarde-Logsdon, for their selfless service to our organization over the past several years.

Circling back to 3CI, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on our commitment to our mission: helping our veterans! It will take everyone's commitment to grow our Department and advance our veterans' outreach, realizing it is going to be hard work. But, if we work together, we are unstoppable. Through our programs, patriotic ceremonies, service officer support, and recruiting events, we'll expand our outreach and broaden our influence for all veterans in our communities. I encourage you to prepare with

the end in mind, develop an executable plan, and strive to support the National VFW priorities and goals.

Thank you for all you do Helping Our Veterans!

New Mexico VFW State Officers 2023-2024

National Council Member - Victoria Haddox 5890 Rio Rancho
 Commander - Brian Ravak 6917 Las Cruces
 Sr. Vice Commander - James Haddox 5890 Rio Rancho
 Jr. Vice Commander - Mack Dyer 12184 Roswell
 Quartermaster - Dave Fouse 7686 Alamogordo
 Chaplain -
 Judge Advocate - Vincent BJ Lawrence 7686 Alamogordo
 Surgeon - Len Hampton 6917 Las Cruces
 Past State Cmdr - Victoria Haddox 5890 Rio Rancho
 Inspector - Roger Bartosiewicz 3280 Clovis
 Chief of Staff - Kathi Schiebel 6917 Las Cruces
 Service Officer - Louis Rossi 5890 Rio Rancho

District Commanders

District 1 - Jamie Poncho 614 Aztec
 District 2 - James Berdine 10763 Albuquerque
 District 3 - Mary Tutza 6917 Las Cruces
 District 4 - Jack Doil 1389 Elephant Butte
 District 5 - Danny Cruz 1547 Las Vegas
 District 6 - Benjamin Pearce 5610 Espanola
 District 7 - Mark Bowman 3274 Hobbs
 District 8 - Justin Knapp 2528 Tucumcari

New Mexico VFW News

Official Publication of the Department of New Mexico Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Three issues: September, December, and May. News items and photographs, etc., should be sent to VFW Dept. Editor, vfnwmeditor@yahoo.com no later than the 10th day of the month preceding the month of publication. Editor is Mark Decker.



Adjutant/Quartermaster Message



Dave Fouse

Comrades,
New Mexico was well represented at the National Convention in Louisville, KY, thanks to all who attended. As many of you know, there have been a few changes to the National By-Laws, and Manual of Procedures that have been approved.

I highly encourage each of you to purchase a new 2025 Podium Edition, especially if you are a Post or District Officer. I have

been to a few Post meetings that are still being held with an old book.

We are somewhat on track with submitting minutes and audits, but, far behind on Community Activity Reports and Buddy Poppy Orders. Let's pick up the pace a bit and get these taken care of. REMINDER all Audits, Minutes, Donations, & Poppy Orders are to be sent to the State Quartermaster, Dave Fouse by mail or email. See the directory for contact info.

The Mid-Winter Conference is coming fast. It will be held at Albuquerque Marriott Airport Hotel. The registration packets will be posted online soon at www.vfwnm.org under ABOUT US then ANNOUNCEMENTS. Scroll down to the bottom. We are out of donated funds for the hospitality room. If we want to continue this tradition; please send your donations to Department HQ's; in the memo enter hospitality room or a variation thereof. Asking each Post and District to donate \$20.00.

Important Dates

September 8	3280 Clovis District 8
September 14	6917 Las Cruces Commander Homecoming
September 14	1547 Las Vegas District 5
September 21	3221 Grants District 1
October 19	5610 Espanola District 6
October 26	6216 Albuquerque District 2
October 27	7686 Alamogordo District 3
October 31	VOD/PP/Teacher due to Post





VFWA District 15 Council Member



Chrissy Harlan

The 2024 VFW Auxiliary National Convention is in the record books now. It was great meeting up with old friends and making new ones. Congratulations to Bambi Johnson and Beth Miller and both Departments for joining the Circle of Excellence. Both Departments worked hard to achieve this award.

hopefully it put the National Organization on notice that we are paying attention and that they may not get away with overages again.

At the 2023 Convention Council meeting, I moved to have all the National Council of Administration documents (with the exception of disciplinary actions) on Malta for ALL members to review, and the motion passed. Members of both Departments were telling me that they were not on their Malta pages so I asked why they were not up. I was told by the National Secretary that the approved budget is under Member Resources. It was the intent of the motion that the proposed budget and minutes be there as well, so we need to present a new and precisely worded motion at the Mid-Year Conference.

During the Convention, 15 resolutions were presented to the members to vote on bylaw changes. I will only go through a few of them here, but if you have questions on the others, they should be on Malta under Member Resources soon. You can also always contact your Department Presidents or myself if you have questions.

Thank you to all the members from New Mexico and Arizona that were at the National Convention and talked with me. My love to you all, and I look forward to seeing you again soon.

The resolution to expand our membership eligibility criteria failed. Had it passed it would not have been approved by the VFW due to our charter regulations. We were told that the VFW is working on ways to expand our eligibility so hopefully by this time next year we may have other options. The VFW did approve a resolution to make Purple Heart Medal recipients eligible regardless of any other service medals.

The resolution to allow District dues up to 75 cents was amended to \$1 and passed. The resolution regarding electing National Council Members was tabled in order to find better wording, and the resolution concerning treasurer's reports in a 3 ring binder passed. The most contentious resolution was regarding deleting the requirement to profess a belief in God. After much emotional discussion the vote was almost 50/50 with 1306 votes in favor of removing the language and 1377 against. For whatever reason there were 91 abstention votes.

During the National Council of Administration meeting, I asked several questions regarding the 2023-2024 Budget. My main concern was with the overages in travel for the National President and her documentarian. Having spoken to the Arizona and New Mexico delegates, we agreed these overages were a large issue. I spoke on the council floor about member perception and accountability. I asked the council to vote against approving these overages but the motion to approve them still passed. I did what I could and

New Mexico VFW Auxiliary State Officers 2022-2023

National Councilwoman - Chrissy Harlan *Arizona*
 President - Renee King 2951 *Santa Fe*
 Sr. Vice President - Kelly Fouse 7686 *Alamogordo*
 Jr. Vice President -
 Treasurer - Penney Howard 614 *Aztec*
 Secretary - Jeanette Garcia 401 *Albuquerque*
 Chaplain - Michelle Dennison 3370 *Moriarty*
 Conductress - Shelly Ravak 6917 *Las Cruces*
 Assistant Conductor - Dela Sanchez 4384 *Anthony*
 Guard - Barbra Santillanes 401 *Albuquerque*
 Assistant Guard - Helen Maes 2951 *Santa Fe*
 Chief of Staff - Betty Decker 614 *Aztec*
 Past State Pres. - Beth Miller 6917 *Las Cruces*
 Color Bearer #1 - Brenda Doil 1389 *Elephant Butte*
 Color Bearer #2 - Angela Sandoval 2951 *Santa Fe*
 Color Bearer #3 - Sharlotte Dennison 3370 *Moriarty*
 Color Bearer #4 - Frances Montoya 2951 *Santa Fe*
 Flag Bearer - Nancy Tabb 5890 *Rio Rancho*
 Banner Bearer - Glenn Crawford 8703 *Carlsbad*

District President

District 1 - Betty Decker 614 *Aztec*
 District 2 - Michelle Dennison 3370 *Moriarty*
 District 3 - Marsha Short 10124 *Las Cruces*
 District 4 - Brenda Doil 1389 *Elephant Butte*
 District 5 - Thomas Bullington Jr. 3271 *Clayton*
 District 6 - Margie Carillo 2951 *Santa Fe*
 District 7 - Lequanah Crawford 8703 *Carlsbad*
 District 8 - Suzan Willis 3280 *Clovis*

VFWA President



Renee King

Dear Members:
After Department Convention, National Convention, then back-to-back weekends of our Flying Squadron training, I feel it is necessary to create Department Goals for 2024-2025. They are as follows:

- Create better morale of the members and their families by making others feel welcomed and valued,
- Develop genuine relationships with

Auxiliary members through honest, non-judgmental, and respectful interaction,

- Work in unity - we need to work closely with each other (Auxiliary members) and the VFW as a unified family.
- Membership is important and as we recruit, we need to also recruit for the VFW as well. Our Department Commander Brian Ravak challenged anyone who received his coin to promise to recruit a new member – Comrade or Auxiliary. Together we can accomplish more.

The Department of New Mexico just finished our Southern and Northern Flying Squadron training sessions. It was great to see Auxiliary members having fun and laughing together as we played our teambuilding activity "Auxiliary Feud" in the afternoon session. It is important that we share what we have learned when attending these meetings with others who were not able to attend. We hope to have more interesting and creative trainings for you. I like to hear from members, so would you be interested in mini zoom training sessions throughout the year? If so, what topics or program chairs would you be interested in?

Myself and the Line Officers have started making our official Department visit to your District meetings. We are looking forward to seeing all of our members. If

there is an event or function you would like for me to attend, please let me know.

In a time when everything is costing more, I feel a Department President's Homecoming is not necessary, therefore rather than having a Homecoming, I will be donating to the following:

- National President's Special Project, "Operation Bottom Cover."
- My Joint Special Project, "Combat Impact Outdoors." Donations mailed to be sent to Penney Howard, Department Treasurer PO Box 34, Flora Vista, NM 87415. Memo check - DPSP

If you had planned on attending my Homecoming, please consider donating to all or one of these amazing projects. Thank you.

We will have a Council of Administration meeting on September 14, 2024; more information to follow along with an agenda.

In closing, I love this organization and I love all of you, too. Our Veterans have fought hard to ensure our rights to enjoy life as we live it, so let's do all that we can to return the favor. Your volunteer time and money are never too small and is greatly appreciated. We need everyone to help make this year successful.





VFW 9516 Cerro Renovation

The Cerro VFW has reached a momentous milestone, completing the renovation which began over a year ago. On Saturday, July 13, the community gathered at the Cerro VFW to celebrate the success of the new and improved building. Marty Martinez and his band performed for the crowd.

We spoke with Adelita “Dee Dee” Mead, the Cerro VFW Quartermaster/Adjutant who worked on project management with her husband, Cerro VFW Commander Korey Mead. Together, the pair coordinated volunteers to assist with repairs.

In an opening day speech from Commander Korey Mead, he gave thanks to the community for their tremendous support, saying, “Several large donations came from the LOR Foundation, Taos Community Foundation and Kit Carson, and those were instrumental in bringing our VFW back to life. We went through the entire process of re-establishing our non-profit in accordance with the State, and now we’re fully insured and ready for events. I want to especially thank Mr. David Cisneros, past Post Commander, for his unwavering dedication to get this building repaired, always in remembrance and honor of his cousin, our Post’s namesake, PFC Charles Castulo Cisneros. Muchas gracias to Mr. and Mrs. Demecio Duran, for helping with literally everything from painting, to donating a cow elk hunt for our on-going raffle and much more, and all our active Post members and VFW Comrades from Las Vegas, NM VFW Post 1571. We had the help of some amazing people: Navy Seabees, Army Combat Engineers, Air Force Load Masters, talented electricians, carpenters, and contractors come in and help us out. Lastly, and very importantly, my mother-in-law, Ms. Charlene Chavarria for all she has done; she’s a constant amazing supporter and proud VFW Auxiliary Lifetime Member, and all the VFW Auxiliary members in our community. We are currently seeking 15 new members to renew the Cerro Charter. If anyone is interested in joining either the Auxiliary or our Post, please let us know.”

Dee Dee says that although they received grants, they were not able to afford contractors and materials, therefore the work was largely done by the skills and abilities of the members. “We have veterans who were in the Navy, Army logisticians, combat engineers, Air Force Supply and mechanical engineers, many of whom came out and did their part,” she says.

When discussing how this project was achieved, she says she and her husband put a lot of work into its success. “Korey and I were usually there most days. People would stop by as they had time. We also raised some generous donations through our GoFundMe,” she says. “We couldn’t have achieved this success without

the support of the community. People donated materials, skills, and money, which helped us substantially. Even when people would simply share our GoFundMe, it helped immensely.”

When asked why this project was so important to Dee Dee, she was quick to point to the building as a cornerstone for the Cerro community. “This building is where our community comes together to celebrate, to mourn, to find one another in life-changing times and lean on one another. We needed to get it up and running to continue to serve its role in our community.”

Having served in the military herself, Dee Dee wants to ensure current members can honor the sacrifice of our veterans, both living and deceased, through their work. “Through the renovation, we found so many things from the past, like documents with writing on them from the 70s. Seeing these pieces of our history gave us so much motivation to keep going, because we did this to honor them,” she says. “We have a display of military items and memorabilia of notable veterans at the VFW from our own communities. This is a way we’re going to honor our veterans every single day.”

Article courtesy Questa Del Rio News Written by Mikayla Ortega.



Dee Dee and her husband Korey stand proudly at the Cerro VFW Grand Opening

Post 5432 Awards

VFW Post 5432 Sr. Vice Commander and VFW District 2 Commander James Berdine presented VFW National honor awards to two magnificent leaders.

Lt. James Opel, with Bernalillo County Fire Department, was awarded the VFW National Firefighter Award signed by VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento.

Lt. Opel's daughter, Eagle Scout Abigail Opel, a Senior at Bosque High School, was awarded three honors: the VFW National Scout of the Year Award signed by VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento, the VFW New Mexico Award certificate signed by Commander Victoria Haddox with a \$1,000 scholarship, and the VFW District 2 Award with a \$100 check.

Both of these leaders represent the finest examples of public service in America.



Sr. Vice Commander Terry Brown, Scout of the Year recipient Eagle Scout Abigail Opel, and District 2 Commander James Berdine



Sr. Vice Commander Terry Brown, Deputy Chief of Operations Mark McConnell, Lt. James Opel, Division Chief of Fire Protection Joe Gallegos, Battalion Commander Nick Lyon, and VFW District 2

VFW Post 10763

Post 10763, in the continuing support of the Historic Fairview cemetery, is embarking on the creation of 400 seven inch conduit tubes that are hammered to a point on one end.

Post Member Don White thought of the idea after participating in drilling into the clay and rock and placing flags for Memorial day and Veterans day. Having just had back surgery he thought of these aids. Several members are going to assist him in the manufacture and placement of the flag inserts. Fourteen were completed and placed just in time for the 28th of July remembrance ceremony for the Buffalo soldiers with 5 Post members in attendance at the ceremony.



“

The Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) was intended to allow for a review in a timelier fashion. VFW is concerned with the excess workload in the AMA inventory...

...Delivering more decisions is admirable, but they must be accurate and timely, not just a number in a performance plan.

- MIKE FIGLIOLI

Director, VFW National Veterans Service
November 29, 2023

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

VFW Post 5610



Hill-Vigil Post 5610 Honor guard burial team. Post Cmdr Ben Pearce, Team Cmdr Chris "Archie" Archuleta, Team Captain Tim Cowan



Hill-Vigil Post 5610 Tim Cowan, post Sr Vice Commander, and PSC Archie getting ready to take cases of water to Moriarty for the Ruidoso fire relief.

Honor Guard Competition

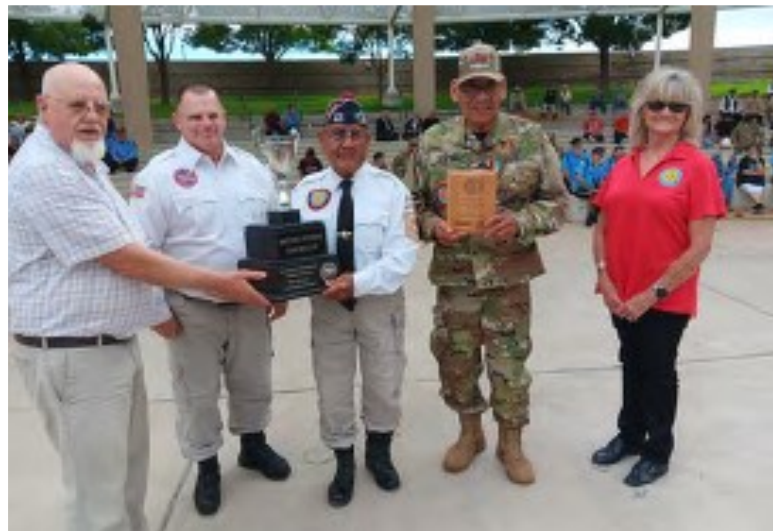
The 2024 Summer Honor Guard Training Conference concluded on April 23 at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque with a competition between honor guards that was graded by a panel of judges.

This was the second of two annual honor guard conferences this year presented by DVS, the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP -New Mexico to provide a learning opportunity for New Mexico's volunteer honor guards. A similar conference was presented this spring in Las Cruces.

Instruction was provided by New Mexico National Guard Honor Guard members on the proper procedure of the draping of the American flag over the casket, the flag-fold, rifle volley, bugle rendition of Taps, and the presentation of the folded flag to family at the funerals. While the National Guard has honor guards to provide this free service, these volunteer honor guards provide a critical service for veterans in New Mexico--which is the fifth largest state in the nation.

"Our state is simply too large for one entity to cover," said DVS State Cemetery Program Bureau Chief David Walker, who helps supervise the honor guard program here in New Mexico. "These training conferences ensure that our all-volunteer honor guards get the instruction and training they need to be able to provide the very best 'final salute' for our deceased veterans and their families."

For more information about the Honor Guard Program, contact David Walker at david.walker@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 670-5824.



First place in the Small Group competition (two or three-persons) was awarded to VFW Post 9517 from Shiprock. (from L to R: New Mexico Dept. of Veterans' Services (DVS) State Cemetery Program Bureau Chief David Walker, Post 9517 Past Commander Mark Decker, current Post Commander Lester Light, Sr. Vice Commander Tommie Yazzie, and DVS State Cemetery Program Business Operations Specialist Diana Myklebust.



Post 9517 Commander Lester Light and Quartermaster Mark Decker ready the flag for folding.

VFWA District 15 Council Member Candidate



Betty Decker

Greetings VFW Auxiliaries and Districts,

My name is Betty Decker and I am announcing my candidacy for VFWA District 15 National Council for 2025-2027. District 15 is for both Arizona and New Mexico.

I have been a member of the VFWA since 2009. I am currently a Life Member of VFWA

614 in Aztec. I joined the VFWA under the eligibility of my husband, Mark Decker. I have the full support and endorsement of VFW and VFWA 614.

I have held numerous positions at Auxiliary, District, and Department levels through the years, culminating in being Circle of Excellence as Department President 2021-2022. I have also been District President 3 times, twice being President of the Year. I currently hold Trustee at Auxiliary 614, District 1 President, and Chief of Staff and Tech Chair at the Department level.

I have been very outspoken over the years about our goal to help veterans. All other items and events come after that. I believe that no matter what, we must be there to help our veterans.

I hope to see and talk to y'all this year. If you have any ideas that might help the organization, please bring them up. If there are any questions I can answer for you, please ask me. I am here to listen to you and learn from each of you along the way. Together we can make a difference in our veterans lives.

VFWA District 15 Council Member Candidate



Dominique Garcia

Greetings VFWA Department of New Mexico Auxiliaries and Districts,

My name is Dominique Garcia and I am running for National District 15 Council 2025-2027. This is the Councilmember that represents New Mexico and Arizona at National.

I joined the VFWA Jr Girls when I was 5 years old back in 2002. As soon as I turned 16, I

joined the VFW. I joined under my grandfather Joe Salas, a Vietnam Veteran.

I have held many positions in the VFWA over the years in all levels of the organization. Some of the positions I have held are: Auxiliary President twice, Auxiliary Treasurer 3 times, District Trustee 4 times,

Department Guard, Department Chaplain, Department Jr Vice, Department Sr Vice, and Department President, where I made the Circle of Excellence in 2022-2023. I have also held many chairs in all 3 levels. At National I was color bearer for 2023-2024, and currently am youth ambassador and page for Past National President Sandy Krebel.

I believe that I have the institutional knowledge and youth to see things that need to be changed, and the drive to represent the Department of New Mexico VFWA at the National level. I am always willing to listen to ideas and thoughts of how to improve our great organization. I know there is no one person that can know everything, nor have all the ideas to improve this organization. So, if you bring something up to me, we can discuss it and see if it is something we need to pursue in the future. Please ask me questions, bring your concerns, and have discussions with me about the VFWA.

I hope you will vote for me as our next National Council member from New Mexico.



VFWA National President Visit



VFW Auxiliary National President

Brenda Bryant

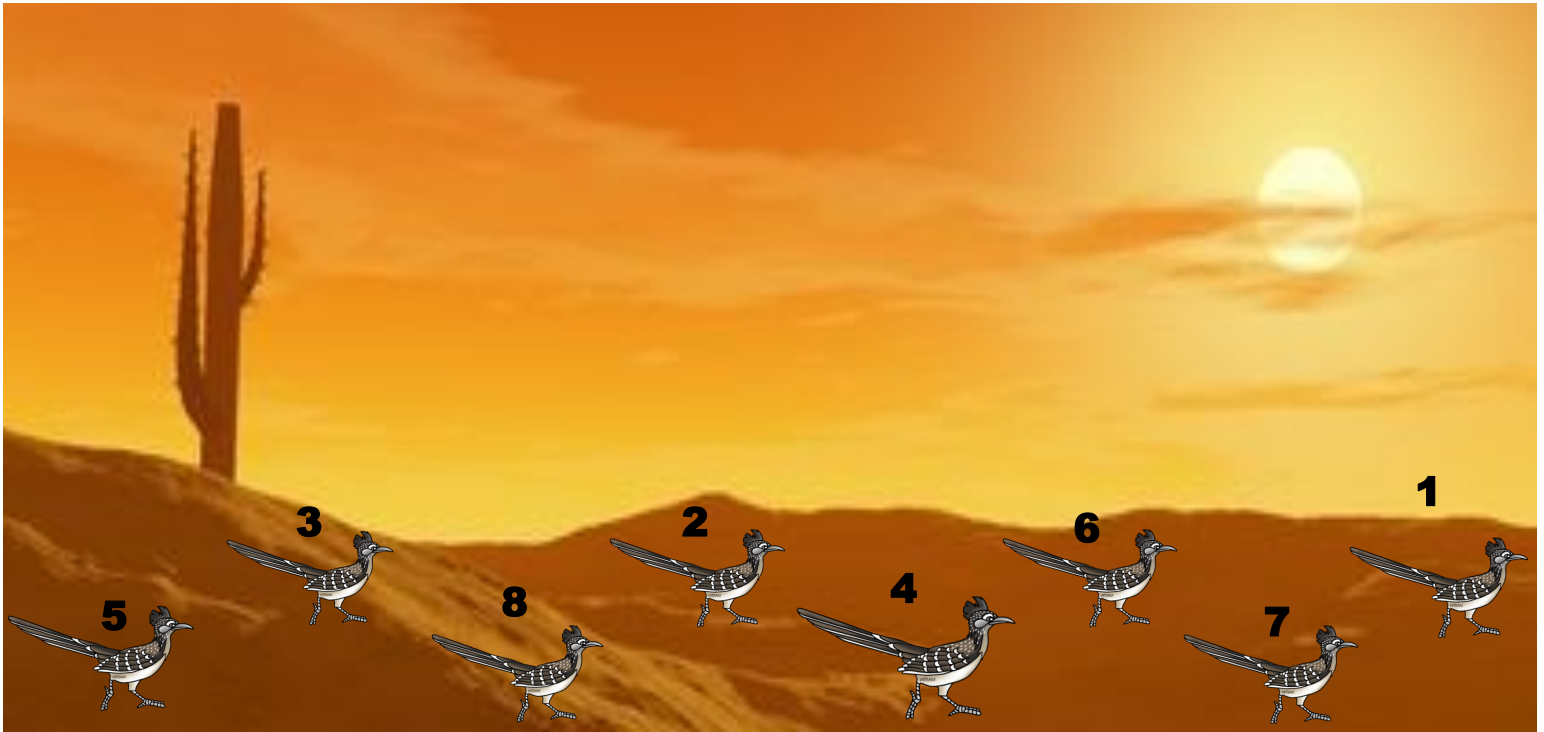
Will be visiting New Mexico
on March 14, 2025 – March 16, 2025



"From Our Roots to Our Branch"
Is President Brenda Bryant's Theme

We will be working on the schedule of events to create memories for her and for our members. As soon as our itinerary is finalized, everyone will be informed.

VFW Membership



In the Race for Membership here are you standings:

District 1—Jamie Poncho 5.80%

District 7—Mark Bowman 2.52%

District 6—Benjamin Pearce 2.31%

District 4—Jack Doil 1.99%

District 2 —James Berdine 1.96%

District 8—Justin Knapp 1.13

District 3 —Mary Tutza 1.03%

District 5 —Danny Cruz 0.88%

Divisions

Division 1—9517—12.50%

Division 2—3221—4.30%

Division 3—12184—5.60%

Division 4—2951—3.23%

Division 5—6917—2.83%

VFWA Membership

Groups

- 1—Auxiliary 1131 Mora 100.0%**
- 2—Auxiliary 8703 Carlsbad 94.8%**
- 3—Auxiliary 9515 Portales 95.5%**
- 4—Auxiliary 1389 Elephant Butte 95.6%**
- 5—Auxiliary 6917 Las Cruces 82.7%**
- 6—Auxiliary 3280 Clovis 97.3%**

In the Race for Membership here are you standings:

- District 3— Marsha Short 84.9%**
- District 7—Lequanah Crawford 83.3%**
- District 6—Margie Carillo 82.9%**
- District 8—Suzan Willis 78.2%**
- District 1—Betty Decker 76.6%**
- District 2—Michelle Dennisson 76.6%**
- District 5—Thomas Bullington Jr 75.0%**
- District 4—Brenda Doil 68.5%**