EXTENSION & REVITALIZATION
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To Everything There is a Season

First and foremost, wishing you a very blessed holiday season with family and friends. There is always something to be grateful for...

Most of us are fairly familiar with the start of the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven", etc. I'd like to humbly add a twist to that "list", thanks to some of my recent Chief-of-Staff duties:

"A time to clean out files, and a time to destroy old items."

I know, doesn't have quite the same ring to it as the Scripture, but the point is important. **NO ONE** needs to keep **40+** years of bank statements, General Orders/Chairmen Reports, correspondence, etc. And in the event that your Auxiliary surrenders its Charter, the Department doesn't want all of that either.

For many years now, our VFW Auxiliary Bylaws Podium Book has featured a very handy **BOOKLET OF INSTRUCTIONS –** those wonderful "yellow pages" – in the center of the book, between the actual Bylaws and the Ritual. Among the **MANY** helpful items is **K) RECORD RETENTION GUIDE** on pages 16-18. This list details exactly how many years specific records should be retained, especially financial, secretarial, membership and other records.

If your Auxiliary has not used this list to **CAREFULLY** purge your storage of things, don't wait for "Spring Cleaning" – get on it **NOW**. The winter months are a great time to tidy. Really, how many times can you watch the same Hallmark movies? And it's not just the Treasurer and Secretary that are responsible for the job. True, the files may be in their homes, but a couple of helpers can review the list and help with the job. **Here's a thought:** maybe excess boxes of files (unnecessary stuff/junk) are a big reason why newer members don't want to accept these Offices?

It goes without saying – but I'm going to anyway – ***this is a careful process*****.** Old records need to be destroyed responsibly – shredding is the best. If the stuff has piled up, that may be a bit daunting for the small, household shredder. Perhaps your bank holds a "Document Shredding Day"? Or they will do it upon request if you schedule a time? Many communities also have commercial shredding available and they will do it for a low – or no – cost.

I close with our National organization's thoughts on the subject: ***A good rule of thumb in determining what files and records to keep is that if the file or record has no financial or historical significance, then it is probably time to dispose of it.***

HAPPY CLEANING!