

Legislative Promotion #1 | July 2023
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Welcome brothers and sisters.

Our National President Carla Martinez has asked me to serve as the Auxiliary's National Legislative Ambassador for 2023-2024. And it is such an honor. Thank you, National President Carla Martinez.

Let me start by introducing myself and why I joined and became active in the VFW Auxiliary.

My name is Sherry Howland; I joined the Auxiliary in 1997 and became a Life Member in 2000 in Ogden, Utah's Post Auxiliary 1481. My eligibility is with my husband Dennis Howland, a United States Marine who served in Vietnam in 1966 and 1967.

I have held several positions at the Department, District and Auxiliary levels; they have included Utah Department President and many offices. Currently I am serving as Department Treasurer for my 11th year. I have been Department and Post Chairperson for Veterans & Family Support for nearly four years, and as Legislative Chair for two.

In 1989, I became Mrs. Dennis Howland, and we combined our families giving us four daughters and one son. As the years passed, we have grown into a proud family of five children, 27 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.

In my 26 years as a VFW Auxiliary Member, I have acquired many new friends around the country. Most of them don't know much about me and we don't celebrate birthdays or most holidays together. However, I am grateful for these friends as they are true HEROES. They are our veterans. And let us not leave out their families who made personal sacrifices as well. The veterans of past, present and those yet to become veterans and their families tend to be OUR BEST FRIENDS.

Our work as Auxiliary Members in supporting America's heroes and their families requires a deep understanding of those Legislative issues that affect each of them. Through our efforts as a team and working with our VFW members, we can make a positive impact on the U.S. Senators and members of Congress, as well as our State Legislators to benefit all our veterans and their families.

Let's each make a commitment to strive for improving the benefits and lives of all those who have served and serve today in each of our branches of military and their families. In a sense our families are every veteran as well.

It is important as we work for the benefit of our veterans that we know and understand the legislative priorities of both the Auxiliary and VFW. It is likewise very important that we break from the old train of thought about veterans and include our focus on issues affecting our women veterans. Many issues are gender driven and need to be kept in the forefront.

Legislative VFW Priority Goals can be found on the VFW website – www.vfw.org under the Advocacy Tab. Briefly, among those priority goals must be:

- That our Congress fully fund programs for veterans, service members, and their families, and never reduce one veteran's benefits to pay for another.
- To ensure veterans and their survivors have timely access to earned benefits, i.e., Congress and VA must properly implement comprehensive toxic exposure legislation.
- To ensure veterans succeed after leaving military service including Expanding transition services for spouses.
- Improve programs and services for women and minority veterans.
- To ensure service members and veterans receive timely access to high-quality health care and mandate strengthening care, research and treatment aimed at reducing the number of service members and veterans who die by suicide to zero.
- To fully support service members and protect our nation's citizens and interests around the world. And Ensure DPAA is fully funded to perform its personnel recovery mission.

This is only a brief look at a few of our organization's goals. Much more information on priority goals to benefit our veterans and their families may be found on the VFW website and in MALTA member Resources. As you visit the sources of information, it is clear to see we have a lot of work ahead of us. But it is rewarding work.

So please put your team hats on and take on some of those Legislative priorities. Become recognized as the resource in your Posts, Districts, Auxiliaries and Departments on Veterans Legislative Information.'

Let's all begin as National Auxiliary President Carla Martinez encourages each of us to ***Band Together for Our Veterans.***