

**VFW AUXILIARY
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM
SEPTEMBER 2023 SUNFLOWER EXPRESS**

This month we are focusing on Suicide Awareness Month. As part of the Health Care portion of the VFW Priority Goals, we must ensure service members and veterans receive timely access to high-quality health care without increasing cost shares. Congress, VA (Veterans Administration) and DOD (Department of Defense) must reduce the number of service members and veterans who die by suicide to zero, and also strengthen care and research for mental health and traumatic brain injuries.

According to the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, the number and rate of suicide deaths fell in 2019 and 2020 for Veterans, for non-Veteran U.S. adults, and for U.S. adults overall. The VA conducts the largest National analysis of Veteran suicide rates each year. The report is based on National death certificate data currently available from 2001 through 2020. Among Veterans between ages 18-44, suicide was the second-leading cause of death. The average number of Veteran suicides per day rose from 16.4 in 2001 to 16.8 in 2020. It was highest in 2018 (18.6 per day). In 2020 the rate for Veterans was 57.3% higher than that of non-Veteran adults.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. **Dial 988 then press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text 838255.**

Also available now is the annual VFW-SVA (Student Veterans of America) Legislative Fellowship program, providing exemplary VFW members who are student veterans the opportunity to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and in their community. The application period for the 2023-2024 Legislative Fellowship class is now open. To apply, visit studentveterans.org/programs-events/vfw-sva-legislative-fellowship/. Deadline for application is Sept 6, 2023.

As always, BE AN ADVOCATE, BE INFORMED AND BE ENGAGED. Be an Advocate for those who can not speak for themselves; Be Informed about the Priority Goals and what the VFW is doing on Capitol Hill for our Veterans; and then Be Engaged by attending town halls and meeting our legislators to see what they are doing or will be doing for our Veterans.

Sherri Jeffery, Chairman
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Send to me to be included in a drawing at Department Mid-Winter and Department Convention

Signed up members and non-members to the VFW Action Corps Weekly: Aux # _____

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