



Department of New York Patriot's Pen Chairman's Guide



Thank you for accepting the responsibility as the Patriot's Pen Program Chairman for the Department of New York.

You are expected to perform your duties to the best of your ability and to become familiar with the requirements of the Patriot's Pen Program. This Chairman's Guide will provide you some of the necessary guidelines in performing your duties. There may be additional references you may need to review either on the Department or National websites and/or other documentation that may be issued during the ensuing year.

It is important that you learn as much as you can about your position and ask questions if you are not sure of what you will be required to do. I and my staff are available to assist you in this endeavor to ensure you are successful in your efforts.

Some of our earliest ties in the community involve youth groups and perhaps none are stronger or more lasting than the relationship between the VFW and America's schools. The Patriot's Pen Program provides students an opportunity of being rewarded with college scholarships of up to \$5,000.00

Please ensure that the program is advertised to our Districts, Councils and Posts and ensure they fully understand the application and deadline requirements of the Patriot's Pen Program.

Applications must be expeditiously reviewed and a final nomination package along with the associated reports must be completed and submitted to National Headquarters by the published deadline dates. Deadlines are important, and I expect you to meet them.

Additionally, as part of your responsibilities as Chairman, you will be expected to prepare a short written report of your activities to be submitted two weeks prior to the Spring and Fall Department Conferences and State Convention. If called upon to make an oral report, you will be invited by letter prior to any conference or convention.

The State Commander is confident of your ability to manage the Patriot's Pen Program and am sure you will be extremely successful in your endeavors.

Thank you for stepping up and accepting this challenging position.

The following resources and applications for the current year programs are available on the VFW National Website at www.vfw.org under the Community Service and Youth Programs Tab.

➤ Patriot's Pen Youth Essay Contest

- [Patriot's Pen Entry Form](#) - Discover this year's theme, rules and entry form
 - [Patriot's Pen Brochure](#) - Help spread the word about our Patriot's Pen competition
 - [National Award List](#) - View a complete listing of national awards available
 - [Score Sheet](#) - The official Patriot's Pen judges' score sheet
 - [Post, District and Department Reports](#) - The official VFW reporting and summary on the All-American Dashboard
 - [Department Patriot's Pen Report Instructions](#) - Everything you need to know on forwarding your Patriot's Pen winner to national
 - [Competition Announcement Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and send to your local media
 - [Patriot's Pen Winner Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and promote your local winner
 - [Public Service Announcement Script](#) - Ask local TV and radio stations to promote the program
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VFW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN CHAIRMAN'S MANUAL

Revised as of 7/7/17

The Role of the Chairman

VFW's chairmen do more than just plan projects to improve their communities. They also recruit volunteers, build relationships with community leaders, organize partnerships with civic groups, and promote the VFW.

You Are the Point Person

A program chairman should understand one important fact right from the outset: You are the Post's point man in your community. As chairman you will be your Post's liaison to:

- school teachers and administrators
- community leaders
- local military personnel
- city government officials
- members of civic groups
- members of the media
- your fellow veterans

Seek out these new relationships. When it comes time to recruit volunteers or you need specialized expertise for Post projects, these community contacts will prove invaluable.

Project an outgoing, friendly personality. Speak positively about your Post, your community and your projects. Articulate your thoughts and plans clearly, concisely and coherently. Remember, you represent not only your Post, but the entire VFW organization as well.

Reporting Your Activities

You may have heard it said that "the job's not over until the paperwork is done!" That is especially true of VFW Programs.

Chairman must report their Post activities in their respective areas at least twice each year. Check with your respective Department chairman to learn what should be reported and in what form. Documentation of your programmatic efforts is the thing that ensures the VFW's reputation and our not-for-profit status.

Master Organizational Skills

As chairman, your talents must be varied. Consequently, your organizational skills should be fully developed.

Some of your specific duties include:

- recruiting and maintaining a pool of active volunteers
- identifying and initiating programs needed in your community
- motivating your Post members, community volunteers and sponsors involved in your various projects
- recognizing your volunteers efforts
- organizing and maintaining records, photos and newspaper clippings the document your activities
- reporting to your Department chairman the volunteer hours, dollars donated by VFW, VFW Auxiliary and Cooties members and other information requested.

Through the contacts you've developed in your community, cooperate with other civic or fraternal groups. They may already be involved in community service programs you would like to undertake, or they may be eager to help with projects that you've planned. Also identify resources at your Post, talk with members and find out what special skills or hobbies they may have.

VFW Scholarships

At the turn of the 20th century, the founders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars created an organization that would honor and serve veterans and perpetuate the values and ideals for which those veterans had served. Although men of vision, it is doubtful they could imagine the millions of Americans impacted today by the VFW's youth, scholarship and recognition programs. Every year, tens of thousands of students nationwide participate in the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition and the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest, garnering more than \$3 million in scholarships, awards, and incentives.

Patriot's Pen Essay Contest

Patriot's Pen gives 6th, 7th and 8th grade students the opportunity to express their opinion on a patriotic theme and improve their writing skills, while they compete for awards and prizes. Cumulatively, the awards provided from all levels of the competition total \$1.2 million each year. Each first place Department (state) winner competes for \$54,500 in award money at the national level with the first place national winner receiving \$5,000 and a trip to Washington, DC. Each state winner will receive at least \$500 at the national level.

Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) started the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition in 1947. The Veterans of Foreign Wars became a national sponsor in the late 1950s and

assumed sole responsibility for the program in 1961. Many notables have participated in the Voice of Democracy including journalist Charles Kuralt, Miss America Anita Bryant and former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft. The Voice of Democracy competition provides high school freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors the opportunity to write and record an audio essay on a patriotic theme, competing for more than \$2.1 million in college scholarships and incentives. Each first place Department (state) winner is brought to Washington, DC. in February to enjoy our nation's capital and compete for \$154,000 in national college scholarships — first place receiving \$30,000. Each state winner will receive at least \$1,000 at the national level.

Promote the Programs

Contact all schools and youth groups in your area in the spring (before the school year ends) and again in the Fall after school starts, to make them aware of these opportunities. Contact the media in September to help you publicize the programs and again in November and December to announce your winners after the judging. Encourage teachers and other youth leaders to visit the VFW web site at

<http://www.vfw.org/Youth/>

Please announce that the National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed both the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen programs on the [NASSP National Advisory List of Contests and Activities for 2016-2017](#).



Your Commitment

To ensure a successful competition, Posts and Auxiliaries must commit knowledgeable chairmen, enthusiastic volunteers and resources to both competitions. Our goal is to increase the number of participating students every year. Approach schools in the spring because that is when most curriculum decisions are made for the coming Fall. In late summer, revisit to ensure they have the necessary materials and are prepared to do the program. Don't hesitate to involve school administrators, PTA/PTO/PSO parents, teachers, counselors, radio and TV stations, newspapers, churches and other service, civic and community groups and organizations to encourage and facilitate student participation, help

with the judging and generally promote the programs. We provide score sheets, brochures, sample news releases and PSAs on www.vfw.org — you would **log-in** at www.vfw.org as a VFW member, then click on MY VFW and look for the VFW Training and Support section under the [Resources](#) column. Then click on [Citizenship Education, Youth Scholarships and Activities](#). Present VFW Scholarship Programs anywhere there are groups of students who might be interested. In addition to schools and home school programs; chairman should consider church youth groups, athletic teams, and Boy Scout and Girl Scout units — any place where young people can be reached.

Work Together

The VFW Chairmen, the Auxiliary Chairmen and volunteers should work together. It is the responsibility of the chairman to recruit and equip their volunteers with the basic contest details to conduct a successful scholarship program from start to finish.

Deadlines

The deadlines for both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are as follows:

1. **Midnight, October 31**, Entries to the Post*
2. **November 15**, Completion of Post judging**
3. **December 15**, Completion of District judging**
4. **January 10**, Completion of Department judging**
5. **January 15**, District participation reports to Department Chairmen**
6. **January 15**, Department winners to National*
7. **January 31**, Department reports to National*

***required deadlines **suggested deadlines**

Order or Download Materials Early

Order or download and print out Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen student entry forms early in the year so you can provide a copy to anyone who needs one. These forms explain the programs: complete rules, who can enter, how to enter, how schools can handle the program and how students and teacher can connect with a VFW Post to present their entries. The entry forms can be downloaded online at <http://www.vfw.org/Youth/> (click on **Youth Education** from this link.) Anyone (students, teachers, chairmen, etc) can visit these web pages. The new themes are announced and new entry forms will be available by April 1 annually....for the following Oct 31 student entry deadline.

Additional program items, student awards and gifts are available through the VFW Store at (800) 821-2606, or online at www.vfwstore.org

All information needed for chairmen to conduct the programs are online now under "My VFW." VFW Chairmen can visit this website <http://www.vfw.org/Login.aspx> where you would log in as a VFW member (then click on "MY VFW.") Under the "Member Resources" heading you would click on "VFW Training and Support." Go to the "Community Service & Youth Programs" area. If you have any questions, or you need assistance, please e-mail the Youth Scholarships Coordinator, VFW Programs, VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, at youthscholarships@vfw.org or call 816-756-3390.

Judging the Contest

For both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen (at each level of competition) the suggested number of judges is five to nine (or a minimum of three.) Judges should be from outside your Posts/Auxiliaries and should represent your community. Leaders from education, broadcasting, corporations, small business, and other fraternal and civic groups are ideal. Judges must not be connected in any way with the students in the competition. Set the date for your judging and invite the judges at least 90 days in advance. Remind them a week before the competition with a letter or e-mail and two days before with a telephone call. Ask permission to publicize their selection (along with the program) to the media, then follow up after the judging with a thank you. Invite them to your awards event and publicly express your appreciation for their help. A judges award citation is available through the [VFW Store](http://www.vfw.org) (800) 821-2606 (item number #4363 for Voice of Democracy and #4329 for Patriot's Pen.)

All Patriot's Pen essays and Voice of Democracy audio essays should be reviewed by the chairman several days before the judging, so that small errors like too many words, an audio CD or USB drive that will not play on your equipment, a Voice of Democracy audio essay that is a bit too long/short, or a reference that inadvertently identifies them might be corrected by the student rather than a chairman eliminating them from the competition. Chairmen should never forget that our priority is to increase the number of students participating, rather than eliminate them. In the case of Voice of Democracy, the Program Chairman must be present for the judging at a site that avoids distractions.. The chairman does not need to be present while Patriot's Pen essays are being judged (the reading/scoring of the Patriot's Pen essays by the judges usually occurs somewhere not at the VFW Post, but off-site.) If the Voice of Democracy judging begins before 9 a.m., you may wish to provide coffee and juice. If judging continues through a mealtime, provide lunch. For Patriot's Pen, each judge should be provided their own copy of the essays and a score sheet (score sheets are available online on MY VFW.) For the Voice of Democracy judging, judges need only score sheets and pencils. Voice of Democracy entries must be judged on the **audio recording only**, so the judges usually do not see a typed copy of each essay, unless a judge requests one from the chairman. All Patriot's Pen essays and Voice of Democracy recordings should be identified by number to ensure the anonymity of the competitor. Competitors should never be asked to present their essay in person during the actual judging. Judges should be discouraged from discussing the Patriot's Pen essays or Voice of Democracy audio-recordings during the judging process and should have no contact with the competitors. They should not see a photograph of the competitor. The judges' decisions are **always FINAL**.

Judging Criteria

Voice of Democracy contestants are judged on the following criteria:

Originality (possible 30 pts.) Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content (possible 35 pts.) Ideas are expressed clearly and in an organized manner.

Delivery (possible 35 pts.) Speaking voice is clear and credible.

Patriot's Pen contestants are judged on the following criteria:

Theme knowledge (possible 30 pts.) Has the student researched and understood the theme?

Theme development (possible 35 pts.) Does the essay answer relevant questions: who, what, where and why?

Clarity of ideas (possible 35 pts.) Is the writer's interpretation of the theme presented clearly?

REMEMBER....INTERPRETATION OF THE THEME IS UP TO THE STUDENT. ENTRIES SHOULD NOT BE DISQUALIFIED BECAUSE THEIR INTERPRETATION SEEMS INCORRECT OR INAPPROPRIATE.

(NOTE: no limit)

Local Competition Alternatives

Recently, teachers and school leaders have shown reluctance to participate in our scholarship competition if they devote precious class time to completing entry forms and (in the case of the Voice of Democracy) record essays. For this reason, we offer teachers/youth leaders the option to simply use Voice of Democracy or Patriot's Pen as a writing exercise. The teacher/leader may submit all entries to the Post for judging or conduct a judging within the group/class and advance a winner for every fifteen (15) participants. Note: This decision should be determined by the Post Chairman; working closely with the teacher or group leader.

School/Youth Group to Post (both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen)

1-15 essays – One (1) entry to Post

16-30 essays – Two (2) entries

31-45 essays – Three (3) entries

(NOTE: no limit)

Post Competition

Post entries are required to include the following:

Patriot's Pen: Typed essay in English of 300-400 words (+/- 5 words -- no graphics) and a student entry form completed legibly. All words must be counted (except the theme.)

Voice of Democracy: Typed essay, audio CD (or flash/USB drive) of the recorded essay (3-5 minutes, +/- 5 seconds), and a student entry form completed legibly. Please refer to the student Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen entry forms to review the complete rules and guidelines. For both programs, Posts must accept and judge all eligible entries received by midnight, October 31. If a Post decides on a later student entry deadline that is acceptable, as long as they can meet the District deadline for submitting their Post winner(s).

Post to District (for both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen)

1-15 essays – One (1) entry to District

16-30 essays – Two (2) entries

31-45 essays – Three (3) entries

District to Department

One (1) entry per District (**with student's head & shoulders photo added at this time for first place District winner.**) *This applies to both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen.*

Judging CDs

For Voice of Democracy, the preferred format for CDs is the audio CD format. Flash Drives/USBs can also be accepted. When burning your CD, make sure that 'Create Audio CD' option (or similar) is selected so the program can properly convert your sound file and burn it to CD. After it has finished, be sure to play back your audio CD on a system other than your computer, such as a standard radio or car CD player, to verify that the conversion/burning process was successful."

NOTE: If the entry has been recorded according to the criteria specified above; Posts, Districts and Departments should never reject an entry because they are unable to play the CD or flash drive. Part of the chairman's responsibility is to review the entries to ensure appropriate equipment is available to properly judge the entry.

Special Needs Student Criteria

The Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen competitions are offered to the public primarily through our nation's school systems. In compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, we provide "reasonable accommodation" for someone with a documented permanent disability. Requests for accommodation must be submitted in writing with the student's entry materials. As an example, a hearing/speech-impaired student may select another student of the same age and gender to read and record their Voice of Democracy essay. The volunteer assisting the disabled student is not eligible for any scholarship compensation, awards or benefits from the program. All questions regarding accommodation of a disabled student should be directed to the Programs Department, VFW National Headquarters at (816) 756-3390 or youthscholarships@vfw.org

Reporting Guidelines

VFW Post reporting (to District level) is part of each student entry form. Department Chairmen will be e-mailed District and Department reporting forms in August, and blank forms can be e-mailed from the Programs Department upon request in either Word or PDF format. District and Department report forms are also online at MY VFW. January 15 is the deadline for **District** reports to be sent to the **Department** Chairman. The deadline for **Department** reports to arrive at **National** is January 31st. (NOTE: the state winners' packet deadline is two weeks sooner - **January 15**.) Please ensure that a photograph of your Department winner is included, along with the notification date. **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON VOICE OF DEMOCRACY OR PATRIOT'S PEN, CONTACT:**

Youth Scholarships Coordinator
VFW Programs

VFW National Headquarters

406 W 34th Street

Kansas City, Missouri 64111

Phone: (816) 756-3390

e-mail: youthscholarships@vfw.org

Revised as of 7/7/17

VFW EDUCATION & TRAINING SERIES

VFW PROGRAMS



VFW Programs Overview

Community Services, Youth
Scholarships and Activities
Programs

Helpful Hints for Program
Execution

Veterans & Military Support
Programs



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

Published/Revision Date: 2.1.17

The second group of programs under the **Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities** umbrella, is called Special Projects and Activities, which cover Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other miscellaneous youth activities. These programs are highly encouraged for all Posts and Departments and will be supported by the national organization upon request.

Before you can effectively execute our VFW programs, you first must know the programs. I recommend to all Post, District or Department officers and chairman, to carefully read the program chairman's guides to familiarize yourself with the programs that best fit your Post and your available resources. As a VFW leader, you should be able to speak intelligently and authoritatively about all aspects of our great organization.

The best available resource that we have available is our VFW website (www.vfw.org). I would strongly encourage you as officers and program chairman to establish a login. Doing so, will provide you access to all the information and materials concerning VFW Programs, but will also allow you to access additional information needed to help you execute your duties and responsibilities as an officer of the organization. Important items such as National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure & Ritual amendments and National Resolutions to be presented at the National Convention, our monthly National Headquarters Bulletin and General Orders, and several online fillable forms.

However, the most important benefit of having a login is being able to access **MY VFW**, where you'll have access to all materials and information within our **VFW Training and Support** section. This section contains videos, promotional materials, chairman manuals and resources, and much more on all available areas of the organization.

These two great youth scholarship programs provide over \$3 million in scholarships and incentives every year.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award



While you're visiting a school, don't miss the opportunity to mention the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teachers Award. The VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators who instill a sense of national pride in students. Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates. It offers cash awards, commemorative plaques and all-expense paid trips to the VFW National Conventions for those worthy teachers. That honor can establish a great relationship that opens the door for all of the VFW and Auxiliary programs. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Community Service**.

VFW Scout of the Year Program

When you visit schools and other youth oriented programs, don't forget to mention our Scouting involvement that includes our Scout of the Year Scholarship Program. The Scout of the Year program is open to Eagle Scouts, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit Award recipients and Sea Scout Quartermaster recipients. VFW's Scout of the Year offers a first place \$5,000 scholarship, a second place \$3,000 scholarship and a \$1,000 third place scholarship each year. The VFW has a long relationship with Scouting. VFW Posts need to consider providing leaders, sponsor units, offer their facility for meetings and encourage their involvement in service projects. Posts can benefit from Scouting by having a unit do a flag retirement ceremony, help distribute Buddy Poppies, or help with clean up after events. These are just a few that would provide a benefit and generally can serve your post. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Community Service**.

organizations. With that in mind, the VFW has established a number of suggested awards. The following are suggested awards:

National Citation of Recognition

These citations are available to recognize Posts or individual Post chairmen who have demonstrated an exceptionally high level of service to their community. The Department Chairmen are given sole responsibility for identifying those Posts and individuals.

Public Servant National Awards (Law Enforcement, Firefighter, Emergency Services)

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars selects emergency medical technicians (services), law enforcement, and firefighter personnel to receive VFW Public Servant Awards. Posts are encouraged to submit a candidate for these awards to their Department Headquarters by January 1. The Department then selects a single candidate for each of the three awards and submits those to VFW National Headquarters by February 1.

Life Saving Awards

The Safety Chairman at Posts, Districts and Departments are encouraged to regularly identify and honor individuals throughout the year in their geographic area who have saved a life. The VFW programs department provides the three different life saving citations (Regular, Line of duty and Valor), free of charge, for local presentation.

VFW Special Projects & Youth Activities

Our next level of programs is our special projects. These include Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other youth activities. Equally important among our special projects is community service. Any activity done by a Post or Auxiliary that benefits the community falls under this broad banner and is supported by the VFW National Organization and encouraged for all Posts, Districts and Departments. Recognizing these exceptional efforts is provided in three ways - our volunteer recognition programs, Outstanding Community Service Posts Awards, and the Outstanding Post Special Project Award.

Your place may serve as a location for the JROTC Drill team to practice and, just like scouting, they are an excellent resource for volunteers for Post-sponsored activities.

Posts are encouraged to seek out ways in which they can benefit their community. The VFW encourages any activity that benefits the community, brings recognition to the Post and honors America's veterans and those in uniform. Every program, done by your Post, results in relationships that produce good will. This good will increases public interest in your events, often enhances your fundraising efforts and can produce new members. A Post that has been identified as a community asset through its programs will seldom have a shortage of members or lack of community support. Use your VFW Programs to establish your Post as a respected community asset. The VFW will then become the organization of choice for all veterans and will reap the rewards of public favor that cannot be purchased.

Helpful Hints for Program Execution

Each time you visit a school, conduct a patriotic event, honor a local hero, serve your community's youth or perform any kind of community service; you are creating an impression of the VFW. Hopefully, that impression is the beginning of a relationship that benefits the community and your Post. The goal of any Post should be to become known as a valuable community resource and not the local "watering hole" in the community. Posts that achieve this status rarely have problems with recruiting or fundraising.

So, how do we get young people involved? First let me say that your scholarship programs, like the "Buddy"® Poppy program, should be a part of everything you do in the community. Buddy Poppies and student entry forms for the scholarships should be present at every event where the public is involved.

We will discuss schools first, but later we will explore a variety of other opportunities to present our scholarship programs.

Contact schools, home school associations and other youth organizations early, preferably in April. This is the time of year when they begin planning for the coming fall. When you visit a school, don't go unannounced, call first to find out with whom you should meet and make an appointment.

associations, YMCA's and YWCA's - anywhere there are large groups of young people who may wish to participate.

In recent years, home school programs have produced a number of winning participants. Home school parents and their associations are generally patriotic, have broader latitude for selecting curricula and are always looking for projects that have value beyond the immediate lesson.

Veterans & Military Support Programs

To continue to detail the core programs, as mentioned earlier, Veterans & Military Support is part of the VFW's never-ending obligation to assist members of the active-duty military, National Guard and Reserves, as well as their families. These programs were established to keep the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the forefront of patriotism as the organization and its members find innovative way to show support for America and her armed forces.

The programs under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella consist of: Operation Uplink, Unmet Needs, Military Assistance Program (MAP) and the VFW "Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship" program. Through these programs, the Veterans of Foreign Wars provided assistance and guidance to our subordinate units in their efforts to support our military and their families. From hosting morale boosting events, sponsoring free phone time, providing financial assistance, to providing scholarships to veterans returning to school.

VFW Operation Uplink



Through the generosity of the VFW members and supporters to include Sport Clips, Operation Uplink has provided millions of connections since 1996. In 2006, Operation Uplink working with MWR SPAWAR internet cafes, created Free Call Days using voice over IP calls for service men and women for 24-hour periods three times a month, including all major holidays.

VFW Military Assistance Program



MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Another troop support program under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella is the VFW Military Assistance Program. The Military Assistance Program is designed to encourage the link between the VFW and the Military community. This program promotes VFW member interaction with the local military and opens avenues for National Sponsorships and local level involvement with all branches of service. Within this program are two unique services to help foster the relationship between the Post and the local military community, the Military Assistance Program Grant process and the Adopt-A-Unit program.

The Military Assistance Grant process is intended as financial assistance for Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor events for active duty military units, National Guard, and Reserves. These events are most successful when local Posts interact directly with the military unit, involving the Veterans & Military Support Chairmen, National Certified Recruiters, Veterans Service Officers, and your local and department chain of command. A Military Assistance Grant application must be submitted to VFW National Headquarters a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. The application must be filled out completely, including a breakdown of the event budget and the VFW involvement with the event. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the grant application can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Veterans & Military Support**.

Another opportunity for Posts to interact with their local military community available within the Military Assistance program is the Adopt-A-Unit program. This program was developed as a means to pledge support of the Post to the service members and families of a unit from the local military community. When a Post “adopts” a unit, you make a commitment to the service members and their families to provide moral and emotional support before, during and after deployment. Sponsoring a military unit is a great opportunity to get other community activity projects started, such as coordinating with teachers or schools to co-sponsor the unit. Additional information concerning the execution of the Adopt-A-Unit program and the

District Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Participation Reporting

District Chairmen: Please forward the completed District Report Form and Summary to your Department Chairman.

POST NO.

List Posts that have actually declared student winner(s) and have forwarded at least one winner on to the next (i.e. District) level. Co-sponsorships between VFW Posts are not allowed. These Posts can be listed in either District or numerical order.

AUXILIARY

If Post has an Auxiliary, credit their participation by indicating *YES* or *NO*.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING STUDENTS

Number of students that actually entered the competition by writing an essay.

NUMBER OF POST WINNERS ADVANCED

Number of Post winners that were advanced up to the second level of competition (i.e. District.)

MONETARY AWARDS

Total amount of dollars actually awarded to student participants.

ADDITIONAL MONEY EXPENDED

All additional monies (other than scholarships and award monies) allocated and expended in conducting their program (banquets, gifts, pins, jackets, etc.)

Forwarding District Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Winners to Department

District Chairmen: The District winner's materials that should be forwarded to the Department Chairman (immediately after the District judging is complete) are:

(For both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen)

- 1.) First Place District winner's completed official entry form.
- 2.) For Voice of Democracy only: First Place District winner's audio recording (audio CD or USB drive—checked for 3-5 minute time, good audio quality, and other rule compliance.)
- 3.) First Place District winner's typed essay.
- 4.) First Place District winner's photograph (close-up of head & shoulders.)

If you have any questions, please contact:

Quentin Carroll
Programs Department
VFW National Headquarters
406 West 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Phone: (816) 968-1155
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org



Patriot's Pen Rules and Eligibility

WHO CAN ENTER

The Patriot's Pen program is open to 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private, parochial school, or home study program in the U.S., its territories or its possessions. Dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools are also eligible to participate.

HOW TO ENTER

Download and complete the Patriot's Pen entry form and brochure.

Essays must be no less than 300 words and cannot exceed 400 words. They should be submitted to the VFW Post, along with the completed Patriot's Pen entry form no later than the October 31 deadline.

Students can ask a teacher or youth group leader to supervise their progress in the competition.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points. You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

Theme development is worth 35 points. Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points. Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 54th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.5590
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

2021-2022 Theme "How Can I Be A Good American?"

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2021

Patriotic Essay Writing Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award

What Is Patriot's Pen?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 138,000 students who participated last year in this contest. The national winners will receive at least \$500. The first place national award is currently \$5,000.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has again approved this contest for its National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.

Big National Prizes

National awards total: \$55,000

Prizes include the various amounts listed below:

1st: \$5,000	7th: \$1,750
2nd: \$4,000	8-10th: \$1,500
3rd: \$3,500	11-12th: \$1,250
4th: \$2,750	13-23rd: \$1,000
5th: \$2,500	24-25th: \$750
6th: \$2,000	26-53rd: \$500

The Internal Revenue Service requires that any recipient that receives more than \$599 award should receive a Form 1099, identifying the proceeds as taxable. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the local VFW Post competition. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. This participating Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by local VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The one first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition. The winner from each Department (state) then competes for the national prizes.

Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools can participate, too. (Foreign exchange students and former winners that placed in the National contest are excluded from the contest.)

2021-2022 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Phone

Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Age

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

()

Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander's/Chairman's Signature

Post #

VFW Auxiliary President's/Chairman's Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of students participating

No. of winners advanced to District

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$

PATRIOT'S PEN

2021-2022 Theme

"How Can I Be A Good American?"

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2021

I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant

Date

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.

District Chairman's Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Phone

Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairman

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition, is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairman's Signature

()

Daytime Phone

Email

The winner ☐ has been ☐ will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

How Am I Judged?

You will be judged on how well you understand, develop and present the theme. A positive approach is recommended to express your viewpoint.

Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing competition.
- Contact a local VFW Post within your local area within your state and indicate your interest in participating.
- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Oct. 31, 2021. You can submit your essay and entry form electronically (by email) upon the Post's approval. Entries sent to VFW National directly will be returned.

What Are the Rules?

- Essay length: 300-400 typewritten words (+ or - 5 words max).
- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics and cannot be less than 300 words or greater than 400 words in length. (Essays under or over these word amounts will be eliminated. Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count. At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.) Do not put your name on your essay. The entry form is your essay's cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition). Contestants found in violation of this rule will face elimination from the competition and will be required to return any and all prize money awarded or received.

The essay must be a contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retain non-exclusive rights to use your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

Deadline Information

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring local VFW Post by midnight October 31, 2021.

Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions:

First, visit vfw.org/FindaPost to "Find A VFW Post." Be sure this post is within the state you reside in.

If you need assistance, please email us at the VFW National Headquarters at youthscholarships@vfw.org.



For assistance contact:
816.756.3390 ext. 6155
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

Revised 4/2021

LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION:

CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____

BEST TIME TO CALL: _____

ALTERNATE CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____

BEST TIME TO CALL: _____

SUMMARY

DISTRICT PATRIOT'S PEN PARTICIPATION REPORT

DISTRICT NO. _____

DEPARTMENT OF _____, VFW

The VFW Posts and Auxiliaries identified in this report in this District participated in the VFW annual Patriot's Pen Program.

GRAND TOTALS FOR POST COMPETITION: list totals taken from District report form(s)

_____	_____	_____	_____
Posts	Auxs	Students	Post Winners Advanced
\$ _____		\$ _____	
Monetary Awards		Addl. Money Expended	

MONETARY VALUE OF DISTRICT COMPETITION (add County Councils if applicable):

District Monetary Awards \$ _____

District Additional Expenses \$ _____

Signed by: _____ Date _____
District Chairman

PLEASE ATTACH COMPLETED REPORT FORM(S) AND GIVE
THIS COMPLETED SUMMARY TO YOUR DEPARTMENT
PATRIOT'S PEN CHAIRMAN

DISTRICT PATRIOT'S PEN REPORT FORM

[illegible]