

## **HOW TO WRITE A MEDIA RELEASE**

- A news release should be a page or less and be timely.
- You should give the media plenty of advance notice; weeks, months if possible. As your event gets closer you can send follow-up releases. Follow up your release with a phone call to the assignment editor. (Note: assignment editors want as much notice as possible so they can plan to cover your event, if they merit it). Assignment editors hate getting last minute releases, unless it is a late-breaking story.
- Releases should include who, what, when, where, why and how and a phone number of the post contact person a reporter can speak with. (*See enclosed example*). The information should be included in the first two paragraphs of your release.
- You want to include your important information high up in the story or announcement because sometimes the paper has only enough room to give your announcement two paragraphs. Don't get angry if they rewrite your release or use only a small portion of it; that is the name of the media game.
- Try to put yourself in the editor's and reporter's place and ask: "Why do I want to cover this story and put it in the paper?" "Is this of interest to our readers?"
- Write in short paragraphs to break up big blocks of copy on your page. Check newspapers like The Florida Times-Union, for examples of news copy and style.
- To give your release importance, weight and authority, send them on official VFW Post Stationery.
- Commanders, or someone designated by them, should always check and approve all releases before they are sent to the media. Before sending the release by fax, mail or email, proof read, proof read, proof read for errors! Make sure all the information is correct and accurate. Double check times, dates and addresses.
- Before sending a release, decide if it is something that will interest your community. Examples: "Post 1689 will host an open-house picnic for the public and it's Adopt-Unit." "Karen Nigara was elected as the new District 6 commander."
- Create a media list of local area media to include TV stations, and newspapers and keep it updated. You can go on line to such websites as [www.mondotimes.com](http://www.mondotimes.com); or [www.abyznewslinks.com](http://www.abyznewslinks.com). They list both television and print media outlets. Update your media list periodically as, again, editors and reporters change.
- See what that newspaper or television station's specific style and requirements for placing information and follow them.
- Once you have determined who you want to send your release to, call that TV station or publication and get the name of the person (editor) accepting media releases. It might be desirable to hand-deliver a release if possible. It is advantageous to know reporters and editors and have a working relationship with them.
- If you are sending a release about one of your members, make sure it is OK with him before you send it. Make sure they feel comfortable being interviewed by a reporter. The commander or a designate may want to sit in on the interview to provide moral support for the member and additional information if asked by the reporter. Never attempt to tell a reporter what to write.

# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

## Media Fact Sheet

ORIGINATED: 1899- Oldest major U.S. combat veterans organization

POSTS: 1936 – Congressional Charter

MEMBERSHIP: 1.7 Million

ELIGIBILITY: An applicant must be a U.S. citizen, have served honorably overseas in the ARMED FORCES OF THE United States and earned a recognized campaign/service medal or badge, (including the Combat Action Ribbon or Badge); served in Korea after June 30, 1949, until present; or earned Hostile Fire or earned Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger Pay.

PROGRAMS:

- Veterans Service
- National Security & Foreign Affairs
- Legislative Service
- VFW Action Corps
- National Military Services
- Youth Development, Scholarship & Recognition
- Buddy Poppy
- Citizenship Education & Community Services

HEADQUARTERS: 406 w. 34<sup>TH</sup> Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64111  
Phone 816-756-3390, Fax 816-968-1199  
Website [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) – E-mail: [infor@vfw.org](mailto:infor@vfw.org)

MEDIA CONTACT:

- Jerry Newberry  
Director, Communications and Public Affairs, National Headquarters
- Joe Davis  
Director, Public Affairs, Washington Office

The purpose of the Veterans of Foreign wars of the United States is to preserve and support the patriotic and historical interests of our country, our communities and our veterans; to strengthen the common bonds of the men and women who have served and who are currently serving in our military; to assist them and their families to enhance their quality of life; and to maintain true allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the United States of America and defend her from all enemies.

We will accomplish our mission by:

- Perpetuating the memory and history of our dead through public and private acts of remembrance;
- Preserving and defending the honor, integrity and rights of all veterans and those currently serving the military;
- Fostering patriotism through education and volunteerism within the community; and
- Advocating for the strong national defense.

## VFW COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS – LOOKING AHEAD

The basic rule of Public Affairs is this: you have only one chance to make a first impression.

Two challenges face us every day in the VFW; one, keeping all Americans aware of what our veterans have done to preserve freedom and democracy for our nation and the world; and two, keeping all Americans, especially veterans, informed of what we do for veterans and their families and for our nation.

The last century produced many veterans, ensuring veterans 'needs and interests were given special attention. It's not that way anymore. Daily, the veteran population decreases. Fewer and fewer veterans serve in Congress. Consequently, the fight for veterans care and other entitlements becomes more difficult with each passing year.

As a part of the VFW Communications & Public Affairs team, you can do something about this. Here's how you do it:

First, learn all you can about the VFW, its history, achievements, programs, projects, goals and objectives. Call VFW National Headquarters anytime you have a question or if you need to know the VFW's position on a current issue or want to know if we have a resolution on a particular subject. The most important tool of the trade in the public affairs business is knowledge.

Nest choose a public Relations Officer (PRO) who shares your knowledge, interest and enthusiasm, and can tell the VFW story in a meaningful and interesting way. Choosing a PRO who has these qualities is the most important thing you can do as a commander in promoting the VFW. Make a good choice and then support your PRO. Be sure the PRO has the tools necessary to do the job well.

Keep your PRO informed on events, programs and projects. The sooner they know about a project or event, the sooner they can begin the publicity program.

Take advantage of each event planned in your community. Community service projects often attract media coverage. VFW programs that spotlight individuals in the community also provide a means to get the VFW message out and support your member recruiting efforts. Visits from National or Department officers and generate media interest if approached from a current issue viewpoint. Use every event that comes your way to increase public awareness of what veterans have done and to inform veterans of what we are doing for them. If you accomplish those two objectives, you will have a very successful public affairs program.