



July 1, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott  
Governor of Texas  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott:

Thank you for leadership under these trying times. As veterans of foreign wars, we understand all too well the burden of decisions that have life or death consequences. You are in our thoughts and prayers.

As we focus on the issues surrounding COVID-19, we are supportive of ensuring the safety and welfare of all Texans while trying to ensure we can continue our mission of serving those citizens of Texas who have gone into harm's way for not only our country but the State of Texas as well.

With 297 Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts (VFW) statewide and a membership of over 68,500, the VFW provides a range of services that benefit every community across Texas.

This last year alone these members completed 154,456 voluntary community service projects for a total of 167,622 hours driving over 582,234 miles for a total benefit to Texas communities of \$4,193,280.42 according to the Internal Revenue Service. They also donated another \$1,862,946.00 to organizations within these communities and of important note are the 8,925 Texas students that participated in our youth scholarship programs that we awarded over \$318,788.00 for college scholarships.

Our 297 Veteran Service Officers serve as intake specialists for Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) Service Officers helping veterans file claims for VA benefits they have earned which directly contributes to the millions of dollars that disabled veterans receive every month and significantly contributes to the overall claims filed by the Texas Veterans Commission every month.

Several years ago, we started fundraising to fill the void the VA cannot fill by providing highly trained quality service dogs for our returning war veterans at no cost to the veteran that receives the service dog. In the last two years we have managed to give out several dozen that have greatly enhanced the lives of veterans touched by the horrors of war. We currently have over a thousand on our waiting list.

Why are we coming to you? We have over 200 Posts that have a TABC license, many with a designation of 51% and we are happy to comply with the suspension of Alcoholic Beverage Sales. However, as demonstrated above a VFW Post is MUCH more than its beverage sales.

The Post must remain open and operational to continue to serve the needs of its members, and all Veterans, their families, dependents, and survivors. Unfortunately, your orders have allowed state and local law enforcement officials to require that we not even open our doors due to the TABC license for the vital services we provide to veterans and the community. This is a travesty that is having unintentional serious detrimental effects on our veterans and fellow Texans that can no longer acquire the services our VFW Posts provide.

## **VFW DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS**

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Our Posts provide information, assistance, and guidance to the Veteran community in Texas at a critical time. Many VA and TVC services and avenues of assistance to Veterans are currently closed or operating in a limited manner due to this Medical emergency.

Due to closures and cutbacks, many County Veteran Service offices have closed or have restricted access. The VFW fills this void with numerous informational and counseling services, including assistance to those diagnosed with PTSD. We know that isolation for a veteran with PTSD is likely to increase the veteran suicide rate.

The VFW is conscious of the seriousness of this virus threat; as former members of the U.S. Military having served on our nations battlefields all of us have been trained in chemical, biological and nuclear warfare and the lifesaving importance of PPE. We will continue to comply with all State ordered social distancing and occupancy regulations that govern any other establishment.

We ask that you provide guidance that VFW Posts be allowed to remain open, with the TABC portion of the building closed, so we can continue our mission of serving Texas veterans who have already given so much to our country and the great State of Texas.

Respectfully,



**Richard "Dick" Shawver**  
State Commander

Attest:



**Dan West**  
State Adjutant/Quartermaster

