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COVID Closures Hurting Texas Veterans

Texas' Veterans of Foreign War Posts Remain Shuttered Amidst Governor's Executive Order

AUSTIN, TEXAS—A majority of Texas' 297 Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts (VFW) statewide remain shuttered, an unintended and devastating consequence of Gov. Greg Abbott's Executive Order keeping bars across the state closed due to COVID-19. Texas VFWs have been serving the needs of Texas veterans for over 100 years.

"VFW Posts must reopen to continue to serve the needs of our members, all Texas veterans, their families, dependents and survivors. Unfortunately, because many of our facilities are licensed by the TABC, these facilities remain closed," said Dan West, State Adjutant/Quartermaster for Texas' Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

"We've offered to comply with the suspension of alcoholic beverage sales, but our requests have been ignored. It's a travesty, frankly, that those who served our nation and their families are shut off from the critical services we provide," added West.

The Governor's order and continued classification of VFW Posts as bars, rather than essential businesses, puts these vital veterans' organizations at risk of permanent closure due to a loss of revenue. Shuttering these facilities is already limiting Texas Veterans Service Officers' ability to provide support to Texas veterans for Veterans Administration intake and claims.

Due to COVID-related closures and budget cutbacks, many County Veteran Services offices have closed or restricted access. The VFW helps fill this void by providing informational and counseling services, including assistance to those diagnosed with PTSD.

The VFW has petitioned the Governor's Office to reopen VFW Posts, keeping TABC portions of these facilities closed, and ensuring compliance with all State-ordered social distancing and occupancy regulations that govern other establishments.

"We've heard nothing from Gov. Abbott or state leaders," said West. "Our only option may be to voluntarily surrender our TABC licenses, but there is a long-term cost and consequence to doing so that may be too great for many of our VFW posts to shoulder. The more than 1.7 million veterans in Texas deserve better."

VFW Posts and their members also are active in their local communities through 154,456 service projects, direct donations of more than \$1.8 million in charitable giving, and awards of more than \$318,000 in college scholarships for Texans in just the last year alone.

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