

GENERAL ORDER #4
2019-2020 Series

March 26, 2020

TO BE READ AT A REGULAR MEETING AND FILED:

Comrades, in this time of uncertainty, we must remain strong and vigilant in maintaining our proud traditions. We belong to an organization that is 121 years old and leads the charge in ensuring all veterans receive the benefits they earned during their time of service in our country's time of need. We must protect our health as well as the health of our families by following the orders and guidelines our elected leaders, major health agencies and VFW National have laid out for us in order to manage our business during the COVID-19 crisis. We will prevail and survive to continue protecting all veterans' rights. I believe in you, our organization, our elected leaders, and the major health organizations.

We must remain flexible. The entire VFW Organization is in a state of flux. Not being able to do something to fight this virus is against our very nature. However, my best advice for all of us is to maintain safe distances from each other and self-quarantine until we are told it is safe to operate in a normal fashion again. The use of good common sense when making our decisions may affect our members' health.

So, what happens when that "regular business meeting" for the election of officers, etc. cannot be held due to COVID-19?

1. Begin planning ahead now. Call your officers and ask for their input.
2. Remember to be flexible in your planning.
3. Get the word out of the planned changes to all members of your Post whether they attend or not.
 - a. With proper notice given to the members, meeting dates and time may be changed.
 - b. You may conduct a meeting via video or teleconference provided a quorum (5 members) attends the meeting.
 - c. A regular business meeting may be postponed (with an alternative meeting date and time set), or it may be completely cancelled.

I asked you previously to hold elections in April. The reason you are being asked to do this is for us to provide the incoming State Commander time to work with the newly voted-in officers. Remember that even if you nominated officers at your March meeting, nominations are still open. For that reason, you will need to allow time for members to throw their hat in the ring if they want to be considered for an office. Once you have a slate of officers nominated, contact your members and get their vote to consider these officers duly elected. If you have more than one person running for an office, you will also need to ask the members to cast their ballot for the candidate of their choice. These communications can be by phone or email.

Consider using other avenues of communication to install your officers. Under no circumstances should we be touching each other's shoulders to be installed. If you are unable to hold installations, you may postpone the ceremony until a later date. Elected officers will still take office and may be installed later when this current crisis has ended.

Please remember, we have the flexibility to use technology to hold our regular meetings. Attached to this General Order is a guideline established by the Department of Colorado for your consideration. I believe it to be good information. We can use email, teleconferencing, phone calls, snail mail, etc., to accomplish our elections and meetings.

Under no circumstances does the Department require members to attend a meeting in a Post or anywhere else. If a Post or District chooses to hold a meeting in a building, I urge caution and the use of guidelines established by our elected leaders and health organizations. Do your best to consider restricting the number of attendees and give proper notice of the restrictions to all members. It is important to maintain social distancing.

All Department representation has been cancelled at this time. The Department Adjutant will be mailing individual membership awards, etc. to comrades that have earned awards. All District Commanders that are hosting a District meeting must notify Department. Depending on safety concerns, Department may assign representation.

Post and District election information must be submitted to the Department Adjutant explaining how elections were accomplished, whether installation has been scheduled for a future date, etc. All election information must be included in Post and District minutes and distributed to all members.

Our business has been severely affected because of COVID-19 safety measures. Hosting recruiting events, knocking on doors, fund raising, attendance at other meetings are at a standstill. However, we must attend to our membership goal of 100%+. This is a great opportunity for us to reach out by calling members to check on their health and other needs. Let's show that we care about them. Let's utilize our Relief Fund to pay dues for members that are in a hardship situation, provide food and nourishment, etc. Your State Line Officers and District Commanders have been tasked with contacting Posts to set up calling teams to reach our lapsed members. Your leadership team has not given up, nor do we expect you to throw in the towel because of a virus.

It is hopeful that by the end of April through the first week in May, COVID-19 is much diminished, and we will be able to resume our normal business practices.

I thank you for working with your Department Leadership in getting through this pandemic. As information is forthcoming, we will update you. Your patience and understanding will allow us to continue to navigate our way through this time of change. No one knows better than you on how to work as a team in a time of danger. Together, we will prevail and accomplish our goals.

BY ORDERS OF:



JOHN WRINKLE
State Commander

ATTEST:



CHERYL CAMPOS
Adjutant

Introduction to Electronic Attendance

Setting up your Post or District for electronic attendance may not be as simple as just firing up a conference service. There are a number of items to consider if you are going to successfully incorporate it as a seamless part of your meetings.

Our Bylaws have two requirements, the Post has to adopt additional procedures pertaining to the conduct of its meetings and the technology used must allow the participants to communicate with each other simultaneously.

Let's start by looking at how you conduct meetings in person. Most Posts use the Traditional Order of Business found in section 1004 in the Manual of Procedure but the simpler, shorter Contemporary Order of Business may be better suited for electronic attendance. Either way there are certain activities that need to be considered. Can you "check dues cards" of the electronic attendees? Do you allow guests to attend electronically? Do you normally distribute copies of event schedules, reports, and other written materials to those attending the meetings? How can you make those available to the electronic attendees? Does the Adjutant record the meetings and, if so, will your chosen technology support recording? Can the Commander determine who should have the floor or the outcome of a voice vote? How about a "show of hands" vote? What about the "audio only" attendees who can't show their membership cards or raise their hands? Who will act as the electronic meeting host? Can the host "eject" ineligible participants, or mute those that have exceeded their speaking privilege? How about controlling background noise? Do you need electronic attendance capacity for every member of the Post? Answering these questions will help you to identify the additional procedures that you need to adopt and decide on your technology requirements.

Choosing Your Technology

There is an abundance of conferencing technologies that can be used to enable electronic attendance, but you will have to match your requirements to their features and costs. For example:

- Screen and application sharing allows you to show written materials.
- Raise Hand features can be used for show of hands voting.
- Active view features can help the commander determine who has the floor.
- Host controlled "eject" and mute features can help manage participants and background noise.

Also look for:

- Number of participants supported by the plan.
- Hidden costs such as dial-in fees.

Note that livestreaming to Youtube and Facebook are not appropriate solution because it does not enable simultaneous communications.

Some of the available services that provide many of the features listed above, but are in no way limited to:

Technology	Participants	Cost	Notes	Website
Jitsi	*75	free	Easy to use, no account needed	https://jitsi.org/jitsi-meet/
Webex	100	free		https://www.webex.com/
Zoom	100 - 300	Free, \$15 to \$20 / Month	(Free version 40 min time limit) recording	https://zoom.us/
GoToMeeting	150 - 250	\$12 to \$15 / Month	Full featured, transcription and recording	https://www.gotomeeting.com/

* Jitsi's participant limitation is due to service performance.

Prepare Your Meeting Materials

Screen and application sharing can be challenging if the presenter has to switch from one application to another or if the person presenting has to change. The best approach is to:

- Use a single application and file format for all materials, like Acrobat - Reader, and pdf files.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation in pdf format to guide the meeting.
- Insure that all reports are available in pdf format well before the meeting.

Conduct the Meeting

- Hold a run-through with key officers before the meeting.
- Check your conferencing service, access, and equipment.
- Assign a host to run the conference and present the materials.
- Start your conference solution at least 5 min before the meeting.