**2025 Texas VFW State Legislative Priorities**

**Mitch Fuller, National/State Legislative Chairman**

***The following priorities are not the only issues and priorities that the Texas VFW worked on the past three years, and are key issues that carried over from the last two Legislative Sessions in 2021 and 2023 and Interim Sessions in 2022 and 2024. As always, the Texas VFW closely monitors all Veteran-related bills under consideration by the Texas Legislature.***

Create programs and funding streams connected to services that improve mental health outcomes for Veterans suffering from Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), e.g.,

HB 2248 (Vanessa Guillen Day on September 30) and HB 671 (suicide prevention campaign)—both became law in 2023. Identify barriers to accessing mental health and improve access to mental health resources for all Veterans.

Support the creation of a single state database to facilitate the seamless provision of Veterans benefits by state agencies and improving coordination among state, federal, and local agencies and others that provide benefits to Veterans. Strengthen support for Veteran housing and ensure the Veterans Land Board has all the necessary tools to maximize their assistance to eligible borrowers in home lending and update state standards to Veteran home loans and housing.

Defend the Hazelwood Act and its legacy provisions.

Ensure Bingo continues to operate in Texas and that it’s regulated and licensed. Expanded maximum Bingo Payout and number of licenses allowed annually-SB 643 (became law in 2023). The Texas Lottery Commission administers and regulates Bingo Operations, which is undergoing the “Sunset” process in the Interim two years earlier than scheduled (normally every 10 years). Changes to Bingo being proposed by the Sunset Commission which the Texas VFW opposes: (1) the elimination of licenses for bingo material manufacturers and distributors, which could burden volunteer-based charities with higher regulatory risks; and (2) proposed changes regarding lessor licenses, which could negatively impact existing charitable bingo halls.

Advocate for a new State Veterans Cemetery in northeast Texas and leverage federal and state funds to do so. Success in 2023 Legislative Session—a new State Veteran Cemetery in Lubbock thanks to State Sen. Charles Perry and Congressman Jodey Arrington.

Advocate for increased access to alternative modalities to opioids: (1) Expand the Texas Compassionate Use Program (TCUP), the medical marijuana program in Texas, to include chronic pain as a condition for medical marijuana prescriptions and make it more affordable; (2) Defend and sustain the legality of hemp-based products-prevented SB 264, a hemp-ban bill from getting a committee hearing in 2023 Session and provided testimony in May 29, 2024, Senate State Affairs Committee Interim hearing regarding legality of hemp-derived consumables;

(3) Support continued research into the effectiveness of psychedelics (MDMA, psylocibin, etc.) to treat PTS and TBI, e.g., HB 1802 (became law in 2021); (4) Expand accessibility to service dogs. HB 2951 became law in 2023 and created a service dog program within the Texas Veterans Commission. **Oppose SB 3/HB 2155 (THC ban) in 89th Legislative Session.**

Support legislation that assists County Veterans Services Offices. ***Support SB 594 (end “Claims Sharks”) as filed.***

Ensure VFW Posts are not closed due to Emergency Orders issued by the Governor. HB 558, “VFW bill,” passed both Houses of the Legislature in 2023. HB 558 exempts VSOs from closure due to emergency orders. Passed House 144-0 and Senate 28-2. Vetoed by Governor Abbott due to issues of gubernatorial authority.

Support legislation that benefits the Texas Military Forces (Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, and Texas State Guard) and their border mission. HB 90 (death benefit for members of the Texas State Guard who die while on State Active Duty) became law in 2023. Support professional license portability for military and spouses. And ensure that service members and their spouses may continue to practice under a license issued by another jurisdiction.