

Comrades, Brothers, Sisters, and very special guests,

It is with great honor and privilege that I have the opportunity to serve in this capacity as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary Department of Pennsylvania President. I stand before you on the heels of celebrating our Department's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an Auxiliary, and I can't go without taking a moment to think about the great and ambitious leaders who came before me in this very same role. They have all played a vital role in our successes as a Department, and I'm excited to continue that legacy.

From the moment I learned about the VFW Auxiliary and what it stood for, I was bugging my Daddy for a copy of his DD-214. After filling out my paperwork, I was voted in as a new member and was proud when the membership arrived in the mail later that month. If someone had asked me if I aspired to run for a local, district, or department office at that time, I'm sure I would have laughed, maybe snorted, and smirked with a witty reply of some sort. Well, here we are...

I am profoundly grateful for the trust you've placed in me to serve as President of this amazing Department. This appointment is not just a title — it's a responsibility I embrace with humility, purpose, and great enthusiasm.

I want to begin by thanking those who believed in me from the start, mentored me, challenged me, and supported my journey. Leadership is never a solo endeavor. It is forged in collaboration and made meaningful by shared vision. To my brothers and sisters who worked alongside me, **thank you!**

This moment also compels me to reflect on the road that brought me here. It wasn't always easy. There were moments when my voice wasn't the loudest in the room, when my ideas were questioned, and when I was told—directly or indirectly—that I wasn't quite ready for one reason or another. Those doubts became my fuel, hesitation my motivation, and resistance my reminder to stay resilient, to prepare harder, and to lead with authenticity and conviction. Today, I stand here knowing that those challenges made this achievement more meaningful.

I'm excited to start this journey where "**Every Day is Veterans Day.**" It's more than a theme to me; it's a reminder. A reminder of the deepest respect we hold for our Veterans. A reminder that the Auxiliary exists because of their heroic service to this great nation. A reminder that leadership, including us as an Auxiliary, is rooted in service, that progress is built on sacrifice, and that excellence demands courage, consistency, and commitment.

I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to work alongside Commander Bill Rowland to further enhance the progress we've made to ensure we are working "**together**" with the VFW on every level.

As President, I am committed to fostering an environment of respect, innovation, and inclusion. I want every voice in this Department to feel valued, every contribution to matter, and every member to know they belong.

The work ahead to support our Veterans, their families, and our communities can be challenging, but collectively, I believe we are more than capable. We need to strive for unity within the organization as a whole and work collectively towards common goals. Let's continue to elevate the standards of excellence, think outside the box to accomplish our goals, support one another, and build a Department that future generations will be proud to inherit.

As your Department President, my mission is to lead with integrity, to listen with empathy, and to work alongside each of you in building a culture where every contribution matters and every person belongs. Let us lead in a way that honors those who have led before us, because **Every Day is Veterans Day.**

Thank you again for this tremendous honor. Now it's time to get to work and have an incredible year!