

VFW Elects Al Lipphardt as New National Commander

The Georgia native urges members to have courage and to ‘believe in what you do – do what you believe in’

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LOUISVILLE, Ky., — Alfred “Al” Lipphardt, a Georgia native and veteran of the Vietnam War, was elected today as the new national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), a congressionally chartered veterans service organization comprised of more than 1.4 million eligible veterans and military service members from all six branches of the armed forces. Lipphardt’s assumption of command took place during the VFW’s 125th National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

“I am deeply humbled to stand before you today having been elected and installed to the highest office of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, commander-in-chief,” said Lipphardt. “Standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, the founders from the Spanish American War followed by World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and deployments placing you between the weapons of our enemies and these shores.”

Lipphardt delivered remarks as the VFW’s 116th commander-in-chief to those attending in person at the Kentucky International Convention Center and watching via livestreaming video, at the conclusion of the weeklong gathering. Approximately 10,000 members of the VFW and its Auxiliary converged on the city to conduct the business of the organization, recognize individuals and organizations for excellence and to elect new leadership for the 2024–2025 year. The last time the VFW held its national convention in Louisville was 2013.

In his address, Lipphardt gave his vision for the year, which he deems “Operation All In,” calling on all levels of the organization to embrace courage and the warrior spirit that sets the VFW apart as the oldest and largest combat veterans organization.

“Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts are some of the very few places where heroes gather, and

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warriors meet,” said Lipphardt. “Too many people in this nation have forgotten what it is to be a warrior. Heroes are what others think of us. Warriors are who we are.”

VFW membership eligibility requires honorable service in a war or expedition on foreign soil or in hostile waters. Lipphardt served in the United States Army from 1965 to 1979. He earned his VFW eligibility by serving in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968, and from 1970 to 1971. In recognition of his service, he received the Combat Infantryman Badge, Bronze Star with Valor device, Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service, Purple Heart Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with Silver Star and two Bronze Stars, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Medal, and the Vietnam Staff Service Medal First Class.

Throughout Lipphardt’s speech, he reflected on those he served with in the Army, veterans within his family, and how they influenced his life. A solemn moment came when he spoke the names of the ones he lost during the Vietnam War.

“Pvt. Lewis Sloan of East Point, Georgia, Cpl. Kenneth Adams of Santa Clara, California, Cpl. Philip Adams of Croton Falls, New York, Robert Waddell of Batavia, Ohio, and Rodney Loatman of Newark, New Jersey.” said Lipphardt. “These men served under my command when they paid the ultimate price for freedom. I promised myself, those who gave their full measure of devotion would be honored for their service and sacrifice by saying their names whenever I had an opportunity.”

Lipphardt’s remarks harkened back to core tenants of the VFW, as well as its stated vision – ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.

“I have only been a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 20 years, but I have seen too many members who have forgotten our roots,” said Lipphardt. “Whatever the branch, whatever the military specialty, or whenever the conflict, let us never forget those who no longer have a voice.”

Lipphardt joined the VFW in 2002 when he became a charter member of VFW Post 12002 in North Fulton, Georgia. He later transferred his Gold Legacy Life membership to his current post VFW Post 2667 in Newnan, Georgia. He has served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, District and Department levels, culminating with his election as the VFW Department of Georgia commander from 2014 to 2015, in which he achieved Triple Crown All-American commander status. On the national level, he has served on the Legislative Committee, the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Council of Administration.

“You and I know membership is more than about numbers,” said Lipphardt. “We are not numbers, we are people. I am proud to share with my community – I am a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.”

Lipphardt is a member of the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain, Georgia, American Legion, and life member of the Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, the VFW National Home for Children, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, and an inductee to the United States Army Officer Candidate School Alumni Association Hall of Fame. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Pacific Western University in 1990.

Much of Lipphardt’s remarks after being installed as commander-in-chief emphasized a commitment to values and valuing service to the nation. He also spoke about the importance of integrity within the organization.

“If your word is not to be trusted, everything and anything you do is unreliable. You can’t be called on nor can you be counted on,” said Lipphardt. “There is no place in the Veterans of Foreign Wars for these individuals.”

In addition to Lipphardt, other national officers elected were Carol Whitmore, an Iraq War veteran from the Department of Iowa, as senior vice commander-in-chief, and Timothy Peters, a Persian Gulf War veteran from the Department of Montana, as junior vice commander-in-chief. The final day of the convention also saw Adjutant General Dan West and Quartermaster General Marc Garduno reconfirmed in their positions.

“My ask is for you to embrace the vision of courage,” said Lipphardt. “Rekindle the warrior’s fire in your belly. Put that vision into action. I am proud to lead you, as together, we seek the courage to be the best we can be in all things and at all times.

“Believe in what you do – do what you believe in.”

Lipphardt and his wife of more than 57 years, Carol Lipphardt, are retired and reside in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

[Watch](#) or [read](#) Lipphardt’s full acceptance speech.