

# VFW to 'Join Forces' with White House Initiative

## VFW calls on members to redouble outreach efforts in response to yesterday's White House 'Joining Forces' initiative

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The national commander of America's largest and oldest major combat veterans' organization is calling on his membership to redouble their outreach efforts in response to yesterday's White House "Joining Forces" initiative to encourage Americans everywhere to do more to support the troops and their families. The initiative is the result of countless encounters by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden with military families across the country and overseas.

"Our military and their families have been fighting for almost a decade in a war that has had virtually zero impact on the rest of country," said Richard L. Eubank, the national commander of the 2.1 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries.

"What the first and second ladies are asking is for America to do more to support the troops and their families by getting actively involved through employment, education and wellness. This is an initiative the VFW can fully embrace because it aligns with our motto to 'Honor the dead by helping the living.'"

In an interview with American Forces Press Service, Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden said they were particularly concerned for the nation's nearly 2 million military children, because multiple deployments — and worse — are taking its toll on their school performance and psychological well-being.

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The second lady told a story she heard about a child who burst into tears when the song "Ave Maria" was sung at a musical she was attending. When a teacher rushed over and asked why she was crying, the little girl said "That's the song they played at my daddy's funeral."

"That made me realize that teachers need to be aware of the kids in their classroom that are military children," said Dr. Biden. "They need to know what these kids are going through and that they are under additional stress."

At yesterday's White House kickoff ceremony that included the president and vice president, the first lady said "Joining Forces" is rooted in those American values of service and citizenship that have kept our country strong throughout history.

"In World War II, for example, the whole nation went to war. Just about every family was a military family, or knew someone that was," explained Mrs. Obama. "However, today, with an all-volunteer force, fewer Americans serve or know someone who does, and unlike our troops, military families don't wear uniforms, so we don't always see them ... don't always realize how hard it can be or what we can do to help lighten their load."

"We applaud what the White House is doing for military families, because taking care of those who have worn the uniform and their families is what the VFW has been all about since our founding in 1899," said Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Ore.

Most recently, VFW's Unmet Needs program has dispensed almost \$4 million in grants to help thousands of military families through financial emergencies. And in just the past year, the VFW has provided more than 900,000 free phone connections to deployed personnel and their families, and VFW service officers helped 105,000 veterans to recoup \$1.5 billion in earned compensation and pension — for free, regardless of whether they were VFW members or not.

"Service to others is what we're about and I pledge that the VFW's 7,600 Posts worldwide will continue to do their part to comfort, support and care for our nation's veterans, servicemembers and their families," said Eubank.

For more information on how to get involved with the VFW or with the "Joining Forces" initiative, go to [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) or <http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces>.