My fellow Comrades in Arms of the VFW, our Auxiliary and Patriots that support Veterans,

As we gather with family, friends, and loved ones this Thanksgiving, I want to take a moment to reflect on what this day represents and, most importantly, to express my sincere gratitude to the men and women who make our VFW family so extraordinary.

Thanksgiving is a time to pause, reflect, and appreciate the blessings in our lives. It is a day to recognize the importance of family, friendship, fellowship, and the freedoms we enjoy. For those of us who have worn the uniform, we understand that those freedoms have never come without a cost. We know the meaning of service, the weight of sacrifice, and the special bond shared by those who have stood shoulder to shoulder in defense of our nation.

To our VFW members and members of the VFW Auxiliary, thank you. Thank you for your continued commitment to veterans, service members, their families, and the communities we call home. Your service did not end when you took off the uniform. You continue to serve through your advocacy, your volunteerism, your generosity, and your unwavering dedication to ensuring that no veteran is forgotten and no military family is left behind.

Whether you are serving a Thanksgiving meal at your Post, visiting a veteran who might otherwise spend the day alone, supporting a military family, volunteering in your community, or simply checking in on a fellow comrade, you are continuing a tradition of service that makes a meaningful difference. These acts may not always make headlines, but they represent the very best of who we are.

A Message to Those Who May Be Struggling
I also want to take a moment to recognize that Thanksgiving is not an easy day for everyone. For some, the holidays bring an empty chair at the table, memories of loved ones who are no longer with us, the absence of family, financial hardships, or the weight of experiences that are difficult to put into words. Some are carrying burdens that those around them may never see. Others may be feeling isolated, forgotten, lost, or simply wondering whether anyone would notice if they weren't there.

If that is where you find yourself today, I want you to hear this: **You matter. You are valued. You are not alone, and you are not forgotten.**

You do not have to carry every burden by yourself. Reach out to a fellow comrade, an Auxiliary member, a friend, a family member, or someone you trust. Pick up the phone. Walk into a Post. Start a conversation. Sometimes the hardest step is simply letting someone know that you are not doing okay.

We have spent much of our lives being told to be strong, to push through, to accomplish the mission, and to never leave anyone behind. But there is something else that true warriors understand: **Knowing when to ask for help is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength.** We would never leave a fellow comrade behind on the battlefield. We should never leave one behind in the battles they face at home, either. There is no shame in asking for help, and there is no burden too great that you should feel you must face it alone.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out to someone in the VFW or Auxiliary, we will walk beside you. If you are in immediate danger or thinking about suicide, call or text 988 and press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line. Someone is there, day or night, ready to listen.

As We Give Thanks
This Thanksgiving, let us remember that gratitude is more than something we express around a dinner table. It is something we demonstrate through our actions. Let us be intentional about checking on one another, welcoming those who may not have somewhere to go, remembering those who are missing from our tables, and making sure our fellow veterans and Auxiliary members know they are part of something bigger than themselves.

To all our VFW members, Auxiliary members, their families, and the loved ones who support our mission, I wish you a safe, peaceful, and meaningful Thanksgiving.

May your homes be filled with warmth, your tables with fellowship, and your hearts with gratitude. And may we never lose sight of the responsibility we share to look after one another.
We served together. We continue to serve together. And we will always stand together.

Happy Thanksgiving!
Dan West
Adjutant General
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States