

Upholding a Promise to His Fellow Service Members

Master Sergeant Rick Barela continues the "Ranger Creed" as a VFW Accredited Service Officer

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Veteran Richard "Rick" Barela, 72, lives in Lexington, Kentucky, with his wife Barbara. He is a Gold Legacy Life member of the VFW and serves as the adjutant of VFW Post 680.

Barela enlisted in the 1970s and spent more than two decades in the Army, achieving the rank of master sergeant. He was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame in 2020.

Barela completed multiple overseas assignments, including his final one in Germany. It was during that tour that he joined the VFW. After retirement, Barela became involved in the organization. He has held several positions, including service officer at his local Post.

"I started that job in 2022, right after the COVID lockdown, at the request of the Post commander," he said. "There have been many changes to the VA claims process over the last three years, some good, some not so good."

In September 2025, Barela became a VFW Accredited Service Officer. He is pleased with the training he received to fulfill his new role, which allows him to better serve his clients, even as policies shift.

"The VFW is doing remarkable things for veterans and keeping us informed about changes," he said.

On a typical day, Barela meets with four or five veterans or their family members. He feels a sense of accomplishment when he can help them get approval for a VA claim and believes that being a veteran himself often helps things run more smoothly.

"Some veterans who need assistance are afraid to start the process due to stigmas about putting their claim forward and seeking help," he said. "As a fellow veteran, I feel like I can talk to them without them worrying about being stereotyped. It brings me joy when I get a

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call or email from one of those veterans thanking me for processing their claim.”

Barela is concerned about the current political climate and believes it is limiting veterans’ rights. He is grateful to be in a position where he can help protect his fellow service members, just as he always has.

“I served 24 years and nine months,” Barela said. “I did not do it for money or fame, but for the soldiers, especially, the rangers to my right and left that follow the Ranger Creed — a creed that we live by each and every day, even after we leave the service.”

Learn more about [the VFW's National Veterans Service \(NVS\) program](#).