

115th VFW National Convention Rolls Into St. Louis

Jul 14, 2014

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — More than 12,000 members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Auxiliaries are rolling into the Show Me State this weekend to elect new leadership and to approve resolutions that will guide the national organization's advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, and its veteran and military support programs across the country. Vice President Joe Biden has also accepted an invitation to address the delegates during their joint opening session on Monday.

"As the nation's largest and oldest major combat veterans' organization, we are governed by our members and their elected delegates to our annual convention," said William A. Thien, the national commander of the 1.9 million-member VFW and its Auxiliaries.

"We expect a great deal from every delegate, because the decisions they make help to guide our lobbying efforts that directly benefit veterans, service members and their families, as well as all the wonderful support programs we provide to veterans free of charge, such as our VFW Service Officers, who over the past two years helped 205,000 veterans to recoup more than \$5.9 billion in earned disability compensation and pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs," he said.

"We are also honored to once again have the vice president, who as a proud Blue Star parent of an Iraq War veteran, completely understands the service, sacrifice and anxiety that all military families undergo while their loved ones are deployed in harm's way, which is a relevancy the VFW and our Auxiliaries continue to have with every generation of American patriot."

A number of national awards will also be presented at the VFW's 115th National Convention, to include:

The VFW Dwight D. Eisenhower Award to former U.S. Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker

The VFW Armed Services Award to U.S. Navy Corpsmen

The VFW Americanism Award to "Gold Star Honor Roll" project creator Tom Clark

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The VFW News Media Award to Stars & Stripes

VFW National Teacher Awards to Shirley Harmon Helton, Fairlawn Elementary School, Fort Pierce, Fla.; Jeff Gephart, Holloman Middle School, Alamogordo, N.M.; and Tom Clark, Lake Central High School, St. John, Ind.

VFW Citizenship Award to Burger King franchise owner Mike DeRosa

And a VFW Gold Medal of Merit to the Air Force Reserve's 920th Rescue Wing from Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.

Invited guest speakers include Missouri Governor Jay Nixon, and U.S. Senators Claire McCaskill and Roy Blunt; Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson to provide a State of the VA update; Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michael Lumpkin to provide a POW/MIA accounting mission update; Student Veterans of America president and chief executive D. Wayne Robinson; the \$30,000 VFW Voice of Democracy winner, Madison Haley, from Chestnut, Neb.; 13-year-old Grant Gentges, the 2014 VFW Buddy Poppy Child, from the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich.; and many others.

The VFW National Convention is not open to the public, but videofeed will stream live at www.vfw.org beginning at 8 a.m. (CDT), July 21-23. Only registered and credentialed media from bona fide news organizations will be approved to cover convention activities. Onsite registration begins July 19 in the VFW Communications Office in Hall 3 of the America's Center Convention Complex, phones 314-342-5508 or 5509.