

VFW Hosts 10 Student Veterans to Storm Capitol Hill

Legislative Fellowship brings 10 student veteran leaders to Washington

Feb 27, 2015

WASHINGTON – On Sunday, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW) will bring 10 student veteran leaders to the nation’s capital to meet face-to-face with legislators, advocating on behalf of the veterans’ community for the inaugural VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program. Throughout the week the Fellows will be seamlessly integrated into the VFW’s National Legislative Conference, during which more than 500 VFW advocates will converge on Capitol Hill to deliver the VFW’s legislative agenda for 2015.

The inaugural VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows were selected in collaboration with Student Veterans of America (SVA), through which the VFW and SVA identified 10 exemplary student veterans who demonstrated leadership potential on their campuses and a desire to advocate on behalf of their fellow veterans.

“With more than a century of experience advocating for our veterans, the VFW now seeks to share what we have learned over the years with a new generation of veteran leaders,” said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, a retired Air Force first sergeant who earned a bachelor’s degree in professional aeronautics from Embry-Riddle University. “Our inaugural VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows are already advocating for the needs of their fellow veterans on their college campuses and in their communities, which is why we look forward to sharing ideas and inspiring them to continue serving their fellow veterans through this unique experience.”

“Student Veterans of America is proud to partner with the VFW to provide student veterans with the opportunity to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill,” said the SVA President and CEO, D. Wayne Robinson. “The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program depicts the best of what SVA is as a coalition—a demonstration of the collective strength of our organization,

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as well as the unique, individual contribution that each student veteran makes in this country. SVA looks forward to welcoming our 2015 Fellows to the nation's capital and remains committed to providing the support and resources needed to ensure that student veterans achieve their dreams and, in the process, brighten America's future."

During their visit to Washington, each Fellow will be paired with a VFW mentor and accompany their VFW state delegation around Capitol Hill for in-person meetings with their members of Congress. The Fellows will also receive briefings from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor on ongoing policy initiatives, as well as briefings on ways to work constructively with the media when advocating for veterans' policy initiatives.

The Fellows will also join VFW Commander-in-Chief John Stroud for his testimony before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, and participate in the VFW's congressional reception on Wednesday night. The theme of this year's conference is "The Long Road Home," which will demonstrate to Congress that the obligation to serve the needs of the veteran's community endures long after armed conflict ends.

The 10 selected Fellows and their colleges or universities are:

- Eliann Carr, Army veteran, University of South Dakota
- Anthony Kennedy, Army veteran, University of Pittsburgh
- Benjamin Nussbaumer, Marine Corps veteran, University of Oregon
- Henry Phillips, Marine Corps veteran, Sierra Nevada College
- Kevin Pierce, Army veteran, Florida State University
- Carlos Santana, Army veteran, Hawaii Pacific University
- Michael Stinifer, Marine Corps veteran, Grace College, Indiana
- Robert Thoen, Marine Corps veteran, University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse
- Rogaciano Villalobos Jr., Marine Corps veteran, University of Houston
- Kenneth Wiseman, Navy veteran, Old Dominion University, Virginia

The VFW signed a memorandum of understanding with SVA in 2013 that has since resulted in significant collaboration between the two organizations. The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program is the latest example of this collaboration.

Throughout the week, the Fellows and the VFW's advocates will be live tweeting about the conference via the hashtag #VFWHill2015. To arrange interviews with the inaugural VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows, contact Ryan Gallucci from the VFW or Jessica Coscia from SVA, whose contact information is included below.

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ABOUT THE VFW: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is a nonprofit veterans service organization comprised of combat veterans and eligible military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. Founded in 1899 and chartered by Congress in 1936, the VFW is the nation's largest organization of war veterans and its oldest major veterans organization. With nearly 1.9 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in more than 6,900 Posts worldwide, *"NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS."* The VFW and its Auxiliaries are dedicated to veterans' service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs worldwide. For more information or to join, visit our website at www.vfw.org.

ABOUT STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA: SVA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit coalition of over 1,000 student veteran organizations on college campuses globally. SVA's mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation. For more information, visit us at www.studentveterans.org or visit our [YouTube](#) channel.

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