

Student Veteran's VFW-SVA Fellowship Experience Reaffirms Career Goals

Capitol Hill trip affords veteran incomparable experience

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Army veteran Anthony Kennedy's heart has always been in policy advocacy for veterans. In 2010, after more than 17 years of military service, Kennedy returned to school to follow his passion in serving service members, veterans and their families. However, working toward his Master's Degree in Social Work Direct Practice exhausted Kennedy's Post 9/11 GI Bill education benefits.

While searching the VFW website for information on a college scholarship, he stumbled across an advertisement for the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program. The fellowship program, currently in its inaugural year, offers student veterans the opportunity to participate in the annual VFW National Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Selected fellows join VFW representatives, walking the halls of Congress and meeting with their state legislators to discuss issues facing today's student veterans.

Realizing this experience would be an opportunity of a lifetime, Kennedy applied for the fellowship.

When Kennedy received word he was one of 10 fellows selected to storm Capitol Hill with the VFW he was, "elated and also hesitant because I felt that I had too much on my plate from my current internship and work with veterans and also as a full-time student." Knowing policy and advocacy work for veterans fit into his future goals, he found a way to have his fellowship become part of his academic plan.

Leading up to the 2015 VFW Legislative Conference, Kennedy found himself with no specific expectations for his VFW-SVA fellowship. This helped him keep an open mind to the full Fellowship experience. "During the two days I spent lobbying on Capitol Hill, I walked around from office to office with a World War II veteran, a Vietnam veteran and a Gulf War

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

veteran ... it was truly an honor to [have the company of such men],” said Kennedy.

While advocating on Capitol Hill, Kennedy had a chance to express his desire for future policies that authorize advocacy for veterans who need mental health treatment while reintegrating into civilian life. Reflecting on his time as a fellow, Kennedy said his experience reaffirmed his belief that his heart lies in policy advocacy for veterans.

For more information on the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship, visit:
www.vfw.org/studentfellowship.