

117th VFW National Convention Rolls Into Charlotte

Presidential candidates to speak Monday, Tuesday

Jul 21, 2016

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Up to 12,000 members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Auxiliary are rolling into the Tar Heel 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. The 117th VFW National Convention begins Saturday at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, N.C. The event is closed to the public.

“We are very fortunate to have both presidential candidates speaking to us next week,” said VFW National Commander John A. Biedrzycki Jr. “It continues a longstanding VFW tradition to provide an opportunity for those seeking the nation's highest office to address the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans' organization, which is especially important during a time of war and instability abroad, as well as internal challenges at home,” he said.

“What we hope to hear from both candidates is how they will fight our enemies while keeping America safe through strong national defense and homeland security programs,” he said. “We also want to know how they will create, enhance and protect veteran and military health care programs and quality of life initiatives, such as educational benefits, job training and employment programs, as well as hear a renewed commitment to return our fallen from their battlefields.”

The 12,000 VFW and Auxiliary delegates will represent the organization's total membership of nearly 1.7 million at the weeklong convention. Their mission will be to approve new national priorities to guide the VFW as it lobbies Congress on issues important to the nation's veterans, service members and their families. Convention delegates will also elect a new VFW national commander, Brian J. Duffy of Louisville, Ky., as well as recognize prominent individuals and organizations for their support of veterans and military personnel.

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National awards to be presented at the VFW's 117th National Convention include:

- VFW Armed Forces Award to U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne);
- VFW Americanism Award to artist Scott LoBaido;
- VFW Hall of Fame Award to comedian, actor and retired Marine Corps Lt. Col. Rob Riggle;
- VFW National Teacher Awards to Jessica Mosley, Park Intermediate School, Weiser, Idaho; Donna Kregelka, Chippewa Middle School, Okemos, Mich.; and William Ellery, Carmel High School, Carmel, Ind.;
- VFW Voice of Democracy \$30,000 scholarship winner Grayson Campbell;
- And introduce the 2016 VFW Buddy Poppy Child, 12-year-old Jaeden Davis from the VFW National Home for Children.

Invited guest speakers include Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald, Undersecretary for Health Dr. David Shulkin, Acting Undersecretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy, Selective Service System Director Lawrence Romo, Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts and Rep. Robert Pittenger (R-9th/NC), among many others.

The VFW National Convention is not open to the public; however, a video link to the general session will stream live at www.vfw.org beginning at 8 a.m. Eastern, July 25-27. Only registered and credentialed media from bona fide news organizations will be approved to cover convention activities. To pre-register, contact VFW Communications Manager Randi Law at VFW National Headquarters at rlaw@vfw.org, or at (o) 816-968-1104. Onsite registration begins at 8 a.m., Saturday, July 23, at the VFW Communications Office inside Hall B of the Charlotte Convention Center, (o) 704-339-6212.

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