



VFW National Convention Heats Up in Phoenix

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Chef Robert Irvine are two of the highlights for the week-long event

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PHOENIX — Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough returns as one of many featured speakers who will join more than 10,000 members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and its Auxiliary during the 124th VFW National Convention as it convenes this Saturday through July 27 at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

“Nothing makes me prouder than to have my home state host our national convention,” said VFW National Commander Tim Borland, who is a Gold Legacy Life member of VFW Post 9972 in Sierra Vista, Arizona. “For the past two years, we held our convention close to our national headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri. It feels good to travel across this great land, celebrate all our accomplishments over this past year and remind all of us that every veteran counts.”

The list of guest speakers includes USAA CEO Wayne Peacock; Twisted X CEO Prasad Reddy; vice minister of the Taiwanese Veterans Affairs Council Wu, Chih-Yang; Deputy Director POW/MIA Accounting Agency Fern Sumpter Winbush and former Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and VFW National Ambassador SEAC (Ret.) John Wayne Troxell. On Tuesday, Secretary McDonough makes his second appearance at the VFW National Convention. Celebrity Chef Robert Irvine will receive the VFW Distinguished Citizenship Award, the first to receive the honor.

The 10,000 VFW and VFW Auxiliary delegates represent the organizations’ total combined membership of more than 1.5 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. In addition, convention delegates will also elect a new VFW national commander, Duane Sarmiento, of Gibbstown, New Jersey, as well as recognize prominent individuals and organizations for their support

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of the veteran and military communities.

The convention is expected to generate \$14.2 million in revenue for Phoenix.

While only VFW members will be admitted to the business sessions, there are other offerings the convention will host for the public in the convention center's Hall 3-4. A free, five-day walk-in VA claims clinic and health fair are accessible to all veterans, service members and their families.

The VFW National Convention will livestream its July 24 - 27 business sessions at [VFW.org/Convention](https://www.vfw.org/Convention), beginning with the Joint Memorial Service on Sunday, July 23 at 8:30 a.m. PST. A full schedule of events can be accessed using the "VFW Events" app, available for download at both the Apple App and Google Play stores.

Receiving VFW national awards on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are:

VFW Distinguished Citizenship Award

1. [Chef Robert Irvine](#), celebrity chef, host of The Food Network's *Restaurant Impossible*, and founder of the [Robert Irvine Foundation](#)

VFW Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit

1. [Jane Reape](#), 2021 – 2022 National President of the VFW Auxiliary

VFW Distinguished Service Awards

1. Debra Anderson, VFW Past Quartermaster General
2. Modesto De la O, Commander, VFW Post 1370, Pontiac, Michigan

VFW Distinguished Patriotic Award

1. Connor G. Nicol

VFW Distinguished Historical Award

1. Robert J. Welch

VFW Distinguished Educational Award

1. David Harmer, Freedom's Foundation

VFW National Teacher of the Year Awards

1. Kelly Garey, Van Buren Elementary School, Caldwell, Idaho
2. Susan Allgood, Stephen County Middle School Toccoa, Georgia
3. Javier Martinez, Kaneland High School, Maple Park, Illinois

VFW Fred C. Hall Outstanding Post Special Project Award

1. VFW Post 2894 Chesapeake, Virginia

VFW John A. Biedrzycki Accredited Service Representatives of the Year

1. David Lowe, department service officer, VFW Department of Oregon

VFW National Recruiter of the Year

1. Steven Woodward, VFW Post 2224, Puyallup, Washington

VFW Voice of Democracy \$35,000 Scholarship winner

1. Scotland Stewart, VFW Post 1893 On Woods Reservoir, Estill Springs, Tennessee

Only registered and credentialed media from bona fide news organizations will be approved to cover convention activities. [Click here to pre-register for media credentials.](#)

The 124th National Convention is proudly sponsored in part by [TriWest](#), [USAA](#) and [Wounded Warrior Project](#).