



VFW, SVA Announce 2024/2025 Legislative Fellowship Selectees

Eleventh student veteran cohort to advocate for veterans in Washington, D.C.

Oct 18, 2024

WASHINGTON – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), in conjunction with Student Veterans of America (SVA), is pleased to announce their selection of six student veterans to complete the 2024/2025 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship. Held annually since 2014, student veteran fellows gain invaluable experience advocating in their communities and on Capitol Hill for solutions to pressing veterans’ issues.

“Advocacy is a core pillar of the VFW’s mission, and it’s about much more than our leaders testifying before Congress,” said VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt. “It’s also about mentorship and empowering the next generation of veteran advocates to use their voices to do what they believe is right. The platform we have is only effective if we bring more veterans to the table with us, and I am thrilled to welcome the next class of student veteran legislative fellows!”

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship is a roughly semester-long immersive experience wherein fellows receive advocacy training and mentorship from each organizations’ professional staff, create community outreach plans and actively engage community and national leaders on a shared VFW and SVA policy priority. To qualify for the fellowship, student veterans must be a VFW member, be currently enrolled in an accredited college or university program, write an essay conveying the importance of veteran advocacy, submit a video detailing why they are a good fit for the program, and complete an interview.

“The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship continues to empower student veterans across the nation by giving them a platform to engage directly with Congress on the issues that matter most to our community,” said SVA National President and Chief Executive Officer Jared S. Lyon, a VFW Post 3308 Life member in Tallahassee, Florida. “The fellowship involves researching, coordinating, reporting, and advocating on behalf of a specific veterans’ policy proposal. Through this program, our fellows are equipped to advocate for meaningful

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change. Each year, I'm inspired by the dedication and passion of these emerging student veteran leaders, and I'm confident that their contributions will leave a lasting impact on veteran policy and the broader legislative landscape.”

The six fellows selected for the 2024/2025 class are:

1. Jose Ayon, Army veteran, University of Southern California
2. Jennifer Ross, Air Force veteran, Cornell University
3. Noah Sorseth, Army veteran, George Fox University
4. Casey Stege, Army veteran, Baylor University
5. Terry Traylor, Marine Corps veteran, North Dakota State University
6. Polina Washington, Army veteran, The University of Texas at Austin

As part the program, fellows will attend SVA's NATCON 2025 in January before heading to Washington, D.C., in March to participate in the VFW's annual Washington Conference. During the VFW's conference, fellows will accompany VFW advocates from their respective states to discuss the shared policy priority with lawmakers on Capitol Hill resulting in tangible advocacy experience at the highest levels.

Now in its 11th year, the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship continues to be a beacon of collaboration between two organizations whose passions are rooted in serving veterans. Student veterans who complete this program often continue to make noteworthy local and national contributions to the veteran community through myriad roles including those in leadership, service and advocacy.

To interview any of the selected fellows, contact VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director, Kristina Keenan, at kkeen@vfw.org.

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About the VFW: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With more than 1.4 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in nearly 6,000 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim “NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS” than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans' service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at vfw.org.

About SVA: With a focused mission on empowering student veterans, Student Veterans of America® (SVA) is committed to providing an educational experience that goes beyond the classroom. Through a dedicated network of nearly 1,600 on-campus chapters in all 50 states and 4 countries representing more than 750,000 student veterans, SVA aims to inspire yesterday's warriors by connecting student veterans with a community of like-minded chapter leaders. Every day these passionate leaders work to provide the necessary resources, network support, and advocacy to ensure student veterans can effectively connect, expand their skills, and ultimately achieve their greatest potential. For more information, visit us at studentveterans.org.