VFW National Convention, Bush Sums Up Vet, War Accomplishments

Aug 19, 2008

ORLANDO, Fla. — Announcing at today's Business Session that this will be his last address to a convention of veterans as Commander-in-Chief, President George Bush outlined his achievements in the area of veterans affairs. These included nearly doubling the VA budget, expanding community grants for homeless veterans, signing concurrent receipt legislation and investing millions of dollars in traumatic brain injury and psychological disorder research. He added, "I was pleased to sign a piece of legislation that the VFW has long championed—a GI Bill for the 21st century."

Speaking about the conflict with Islamic terrorism, he said, "We're at war against determined enemies, and we must not rest until that war is won. This war cannot be won, however, if we treat terrorism primarily as a matter of law enforcement." All assets of national power must be used, he said: "We'll continue to battle the terrorists overseas so we do not have to face them here at home."

On the matter of Afghanistan, the President said "we will ensure that the country never becomes a safe haven again for terrorists who seek to launch attacks on America or our allies." Regarding the other war zone in Iraq, he said we all want the troops home, but "the VFW understands that the only way to bring them home is with victory."

Alluding to who will soon assume the Oval Office, Bush said, "America's future leaders must remember that the war on terror will be won on the offense—and that's where our military must stay."

Moving to the most recent international crisis, the President declared: "Now the world must stand for freedom in Georgia." As a step in that direction, he announced the formation of a new NATO-Georgia Commission, as well as sending NATO teams to assess the country's needs. "Our military will continue to provide needed humanitarian aid to the Georgian people," he said. "The United States will work with our allies to ensure Georgia's independence and territorial integrity."

This was the President's fifth address to a VFW national convention. Bush congratulated the organization, saying of members that he "relied on your counsel" and "benefited from your

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

Online Version: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2008/8/vfw-national-convention---bush-sums-up-vet---war-accomplishments

wisdom." Click to read speech

Focus on Disabled Vets

Bob Foster, commander of Post 2285 in Elmsford, N.Y., introduced two participants in the Canines for Combat Veterans program, for which he is the lead fundraiser. Raymond Hubbard, an Army specialist who lost his left leg below the knee and sustained other severe wounds following a rocket attack near Baghdad on July 4, 2006, appeared with his assistance dog, Dace. He spoke at length about his recovery process. Hubbard's carotid artery was severed and he suffered a stroke, which forced him to relearn basic skills such as speaking.

The 29-year-old husband and father of two sons from Wisconsin, who also suffers from PTSD, offered his opinion on troop support. "The 'support our troops' mentality is disconnected without supporting the cause," he said. "Throwing a bumper sticker on a car is not doing us justice." Then he asked, "What will it take for my generation to heed the call as did those Americans of the WWII generation?" The Canines for Combat Veterans program, which fields 11 canine assistance teams, is the veterans section of NEADS (Dogs for Deaf and Disabled Americans, www.neads.org).

Victor Biggs, executive director of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, provided an update on the memorial's $86 million fundraising goal. He noted that VFW donated $100,000 in 2005. "VFW was one of the first veterans groups to support the memorial," he said. Some $70 million has been collected for the memorial, set to open in 2010. Construction will not begin until the goal is met. The star-shaped memorial (www.avdlm.com) will be adjacent to the National Mall, southwest of the U.S. Capitol. It will honor the nation's 3 million living disabled veterans of war and peacetime.

Ken Ductor of the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) explained that the "focus on the intangibles" is what sets WWR apart from other wounded warrior programs. WWR is divided into east and west units with one at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and the other at Camp Lejeune, N.C. The program's network includes units at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany; the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.; Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.; Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas; Okinawa, Japan; Guam; and Hawaii. The goal is to contact wounded Marines every 30 days to monitor their recovery progress.

Awards and Other Speakers

Patti Patton-Bader received VFW's James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award for a care package program she started in 2003 when her son was deployed to Iraq with the Army. Soldiers' Angels is now the largest organization of its kind with 200,000 volunteers who have helped 200,000 troops.

One project included sending 10,000 backpacks to combat support hospitals. “When my son went to Iraq, I was so proud of him,” said Patton-Bader, whose great-uncle was Gen. George Patton and father served two tours in Vietnam. “I have the utmost respect for all who have the guts to put on the uniform.”

Barbara Radding Morgan received VFW’s Aviation and Space Award for her participation on a 2007 space shuttle Endeavour mission, NASA’s 22nd space station flight. Before her involvement in NASA’s Teacher in Space program, she taught at McCall-Donnelly Elementary School in McCall, Idaho, from 1978-98. “This is an incredible honor because it comes from you, and I mean that from the bottom of my heart,” she said.

Bradley Trowbridge, a member of Boy Scouts of America Troop 125 in Celebration, Fla., explained his Eagle Scout project, which was started by fellow Eagle Scout Simon Sharp in 2006. Trowbridge took over the project after Sharp was diagnosed with leukemia and died on Nov. 14, 2007. The end result was the $70,000 Celebration Veterans Memorial, which is to be dedicated on Nov. 15 this year. VFW contributed $7,960 from its Silent Auction at this year’s convention.

Texas Governor Rick Perry congratulated incoming Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner on his installation as VFW’s leader. Perry, an Air Force veteran, announced the formation of the Texas Veterans Leadership program, based on the Reagan-era Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program. It will assist Afghanistan and Iraq War veterans in obtaining jobs. He also announced that all veterans eligible for the new GI Bill, regardless of their home state, would be offered in-state tuition at any Texas university if the proposal passes in the legislature.

Mike Gormalley received VFW’s Distinguished Service Medal for his 16 years of service while working at VFW’s National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo.