

President to Speak Monday at Convention

Aug 12, 2009

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has accepted an invitation to speak Monday at the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. The annual convention of America's oldest major veterans' organization starts Saturday in the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Ariz.

"It is a time-honored tradition for the commander-in-chief of our nation's armed forces to address the national convention of America's largest organization of combat veterans, which celebrates its 110th anniversary next month," said VFW National Commander Glen M. Gardner Jr., a Vietnam veteran from Round Rock, Texas.

"We are grateful to President Obama for taking the time to speak to us on issues that are vitally important to our nation's veterans, her military and their families."

Almost 13,000 VFW and Ladies Auxiliary delegates will represent the 2.1 million-member organization at the weeklong convention. Their mission will be to approve new national priorities to guide the organization's advocacy efforts in Congress on behalf of the nation's 23.5 million veterans, 2.2 million servicemembers and their families. Advocacy issues include military and veterans' healthcare, benefits, and Quality of Life programs, as well as military readiness and national and homeland security.

Convention delegates will elect a new VFW national commander as well as recognize prominent individuals for their support of veterans and military personnel, to include astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Scott Carpenter; hall of fame entertainer Connie Stevens; Operation Comfort founder Janis Roznowski; Major League Baseball player Rick Monday; Army Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Rhonda Cornum; and retired Air Force Gen. Michael Hayden, the former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the CIA.

Also addressing the delegates will be Arizona Gov. Janice Brewer and Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki, Rep. Harry Mitchell (D-Ariz.), and House VA Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-Calif.).

Although the VFW National Convention is a closed event, the public is invited to watch live

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streaming video of convention activities starting everyday at 8 a.m., MST, Aug. 17-20. To view, go to www.vfw.org.

MEDIA NOTE: The VFW National Convention is not open to the public. Only registered and credentialed media from bona fide news organizations will be approved to cover convention activities. To register, contact Peggy Allee, pallee@vfw.org, beginning Aug. 16 in the VFW Communications Office in room 123 of the Phoenix Convention Center. The phone numbers will be (602) 626-8771 and 8772, and fax 8773. Additional onsite contacts are VFW National Headquarters communications director Jerry Newberry at jnewberry@vfw.org, cell 816-835-1851, and VFW Washington Office public affairs director Joe Davis at jdavis@vfw.org, cell 202-374-9998.