Air Force Veteran Elected to Lead Americas Largest Combat Veterans Organization

New VFW National Commander Vows to Defend Freedom's Defenders

Jul 24, 2014

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (July 24, 2014) — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States concluded its 115th national convention yesterday with the election of the new VFW National Commander, John W. Stroud.

Stroud served in the U.S. Air Force from 1976-1997, including a tour in Korea in 1992-1993 with the 51st Fighter Wing at Osan Air Base as a Flight Operations Superintendent. His decorations include four Meritorious Service Medals, three Air Force Commendation Medals, three Air Force Achievement Medals, the Korea Defense Service Medal and the National Defense Service Medal.

He is a resident of Hawthorne, Nev., and a Gold Legacy Life Member of Post 2313, and has served the VFW in a number of leadership positions including Nevada Department Commander and Chairman of the National Veterans Service Committee.

During his acceptance speech, Stroud addressed the recent VA crisis stating, “the VA is a health care system worth saving that right now must identify and fix what’s broken … that needs to hold people appropriately accountable to the fullest extent of the law … and a system that must restore the faith of veterans in their VA. He added that he is confident Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson and nominee Bob McDonald—if confirmed—will not make the same mistake as the previous VA Secretary who simply trusted his employees to the point of his demise.

Stroud recounted his first experience with the VFW, stopping in Post 10047 in Las Vegas, Nev., after seeing a sign that read ‘Active Duty Military Welcome.’ Dressed in fatigues, he entered the Post and was immediately welcomed. Surrounded by his comrades, he learned

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of the organization's many programs and services, and he knew he wanted in.

"Comrades, I share my story to encourage you to tell your own stories to others. A great part of the VFW story involves the relevance between different generations, and the ability to educate others about who we are, what we do, and who we do it for," he said.

Stroud had high praise for members' work and VFW programs, citing several outstanding instances of disaster relief, troop support and veterans resource efforts. He commended those who worked with the U.S. European Command to operate a Visitor's Center for hundreds of American D-Day veterans and thousands of visitors who were in Normandy for the 70th anniversary of the landing, and praised the Ladies Auxiliary for its donations to cancer research which now total $30 million.

"One of the best things about being a National Officer is I get to brag about the VFW wherever I go … to the troops, to veterans, their families, nonveterans and politicians, too," he said.

Stroud stressed the importance of reaching out to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and educating them on what the VFW is all about. The camaraderie the VFW offers, as well as its services help ease their transition to civilian life. Further, the VFW fights to ensure Congress and the Administration keep America's promise to care for them, long after their successful transition.

"To this very day they don't know that it was the VFW who led the charge to create a new GI Bill … a Family Caregiver Act … Traumatic Injury Insurance … a bullet-proof Stolen Valor Act … concurrent receipt … a lower Guard and Reserve retirement age … and advance appropriations for VA health care," he explained.

Stroud is the second Nevadan to be elected as VFW National Commander. He graduated with honors from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Professional Aeronautics. He worked as the Mineral County Building Official and is now retired. He is also a member of the American Legion, the Elks, and is a Life member of the Disabled American Veterans, the Military Order of the Cootie and the VFW National Home for Children.

Stroud will log thousands of miles within the U.S. and internationally to promote the VFW, veterans' issues and quality of life initiatives for active-duty, Reserve and Guard members.

Also elected were Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki, Jr. of Robinson Township, Pa., and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian J. Duffy of Louisville, Ky.

Read his entire acceptance speech.