

VFW Announces New Student Veterans Fellowship Class

Legislative fellowship to bring 10 student veteran leaders to Washington

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WASHINGTON – Ten Student Veterans of America (SVA) leaders have been selected to join more than 500 members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. when they storm Capitol Hill, Feb. 28 to March 3, on behalf of all veterans, service members and their families. The fellowship selections were announced this morning at SVA's 8th National Conference in Orlando, Fla.

“Student veterans are America’s future leaders, which is why this fellowship is so critical to honing their skills as advocates for all who serve in our nation’s military,” said VFW Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki Jr., an Army veteran and retired educator who earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. “Last year’s inaugural VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows are already contributing significantly in their communities back home, which is why the VFW looks forward to inspiring a new class of fellows to make an even greater difference.”

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship is a semester-long academic experience that involves research, action, reporting and advocating on behalf of one of four veterans’ issues: success in higher education; access to health care; the impact of sequestration on the military; and transitioning from military to civilian life.

During their visit to Washington, D.C., each fellow will be paired with a VFW mentor and accompany their VFW state delegation around Capitol Hill for in-person meetings with their members of Congress. The fellows will also receive briefings from federal officials on ongoing policy initiatives, as well as learn techniques to work with the media when advocating on veterans’ issues. Upon returning home, each of the 10 fellows will also be responsible for executing a community action plan, to include delivering their individual

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research papers directly to their respective congressional delegations.

The 10 selected fellows for 2016 are:

- Michael Aavang, Marine Corps veteran, Hillsdale College
- Robert Davis, Navy veteran, North Lake College
- Stephen Hudson, Marine Corps veteran, Southeast Missouri State University
- Paulo Iparraguirre, Navy veteran, California State University Northridge
- Robert Janice, Marine Corps veteran, Arizona State University
- Rebekah Lloyd, Army veteran, Regent University
- Deanna Parker, Marine Corps veteran, Marywood University
- Charles Pegg, Army veteran, University of North Dakota
- Daniel Snedden, Army veteran, North Carolina State University
- Benjamin Wocken, Air Force veteran, University of Missouri-Columbia

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program is one of the latest examples of a collaboration between the two organizations that was formalized in 2013 with a memorandum of understanding. To interview any of the 10 selected fellows, contact Ryan Gallucci from the VFW at rgallucci@vfw.org or Jessica Coscia from SVA jessica.coscia@studentveterans.org.