SVA, VFW Host Student Veterans at the White House and on Capitol Hill

Legislative fellowship brings 10 student veteran leaders to Washington

Feb 29, 2016

Washington, D.C. – On Sunday, **Student Veterans of America** (SVA) and the**Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.** (VFW) welcomed 10 student veteran leaders to the nation's capital to meet face-to-face with legislators, advocating on behalf of the veteran's community for the annual VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program.

Staring Monday, the fellows will be integrated into the VFW's National Legislative Conference, during which more than 500 VFW advocates will converge on Capitol Hill to deliver the VFW's Legislative Agenda for 2016. The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows were selected through a collaborative process with both the VFW and SVA, where 10 exemplary student veterans were identified who have demonstrated leadership potential on their campus and a desire to advocate on behalf of fellow veterans.

"The VFW has been advocating for veterans for well over a century, and over the coming days, we'll share our knowledge and experience in that fight with a new generation of veteran leaders," said VFW National Commander John Biedrzycki, who received a B.A. and Master's in Education from the University of Pittsburgh. "We're pleased to host this group of fellows. It's a unique experience for both our mentors, as well as this group of student veterans, and we hope it further propels their desire to serve their fellow veterans."

"Student Veterans of America is proud to again partner with the VFW to provide student veterans with the opportunity to make their voices heard on both Capitol Hill and within the current administration," said SVA President and CEO, Jared Lyon. "This program gives student veterans the opportunity to express their desire for future policies that support and strengthen military families and veterans. SVA looks forward to welcoming our 2016 Fellows to our nation's capital, for a second year, and remains committed to providing the support and resources needed to ensure success for student veterans."

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During their visit to Washington, 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 receive briefings from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor on the ongoing policy initiatives, as well as briefings on ways to work constructively with the media when advocating for veterans' policy initiatives. They will also meet with Joining Forces during a visit to the White House.

The 10 selected fellows are:

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

Throughout the week, the fellows will be live tweeting about their conference via the hashtag #SVAVFWFellows16. For more information about the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship, visit **studentveterans.org**.

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About Student Veterans of America
SVA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit coalition of roughly 1,300 student veteran chapters, representing over 440,000 veterans in higher education, across the country. SVA's mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy to ease veteran and active military students' transition into higher education and leverage military experience to launch successful careers in high-demand fields after graduation. For more information, visit us at www.studentveterans.org and follow us on Twitter@studentvets.