WWI Centennial Commission Announces Event Commemorating US Entry

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Washington, D.C. — The United States World War I Centennial Commission has officially announced the national ceremony commemorating the centennial of the United States entry into World War I, a war that changed the nation and the world forever.

The national ceremony, “In Sacrifice for Liberty and Peace: Centennial Commemoration of the U.S. Entry in World War I,” will be held on April 6, 2017 at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo. Invited attendees include the President of the United States; Congressional leadership; Cabinet members; State governors; U.S. military leaders; veteran organizations; representatives from U.S. military legacy units that trace their history back to World War I; descendants of significant American WWI figures; and other organizations, dignitaries, and VIPs. International invitees include the Heads of State of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the United Kingdom, and all other nations whose people were involved in the Great War.

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/2017/2/wwi-centennial-commission-announces-event-commemorating-us-entry



On April 6, 1917, after much debate, the United States entered World War I. The ceremony in Kansas City, and complementary events around the nation, will encourage every American to reflect on what that moment meant, how it continues to influence the nation, and how every American family, then and now, is linked to that perilous time.

“The April 6 ceremony in Kansas City is an important element of the national conversation about World War I,” said Dan Dayton, executive director of the World War I Centennial Commission. “Why should we care? Because we are all products of World War I. The entire country was involved— everyone has a story. The Commission’s goal is to inspire you to find your personal story and connection.”

“In Sacrifice for Liberty and Peace: Centennial Commemoration of the U.S. Entry in World War I” will consist principally of the reading of passages from significant and representative American writings of a century ago about the U.S. decision to enter the war, including selections from speeches, journalism, literature, poetry, and performance of important music of the time. Invited American readers include the President of the United States, Congressional leadership, and descendants of U.S. World War I veterans. Certain Heads of State from other nations are invited to read passages reflecting the reaction of their

respective nations to the U.S. entry into the war in 1917.

The ceremony will also include flyovers by U.S. aircraft and Patrouille de France, as well as a military band, color guard, ceremonial units, and video productions. Students across the nation will participate in this historic event, learning how WWI changed the United States and the world.

America's entry into the Great War created profound change throughout the country. WWI military Historian and archivist at the National Archives and Records Administration Mitchell Yockelson explains that "although the union was again whole after the end of the American Civil War, the United States remained fractured. Recovery was slow until the turning point of reconciliation occurred 52 years later. On April 6, 1917, Americans cast aside past sectional and political differences, donned the same uniform and fought as one under a singular president and field commander in the Great War."

World War I Centennial Commissioner Dr. Monique Seefried said it is critical that the nation remember the momentous events of World War I.

"It is so important to understand the debate that was going on within the United States about entering World War l. In reaching that decision, the nation became united for the first time in decades. Our goal was to bring peace to a world that had become inflamed. The subsequent decisions and actions taken 100 years ago helped shape and define the world we live in today."

Designated by the U.S. Congress in 2004 as the official museum dedicated to WWI, and in 2014 as America's National World War I Museum and Memorial, the Museum is uniquely positioned to host the official Commission event. "It's a fitting tribute to those who served in the Great War that we commemorate the entry of the United States into World War I in the very same place where millions of visitors from across the world have paid tribute for nearly a century," said National World War I Museum and Memorial President and CEO and World War l Commissioner Dr. Matthew Naylor. "The National World War I Museum and Memorial is committed to remembering, understanding and interpreting the Great War and its enduring impact and this event underscores how this calamitous conflict continues to significantly affect everyone to this day."

The ceremony launches an 18-month long commemoration period of the United States'

involvement in WWI, marked by anniversaries of specific events of the war, including major engagements of U.S. forces, key local dates, and more. More information on key events can be found at ww1cc.org/events.

For additional information or to request an interview with the Commission or its spokespeople, please contact Paulo Sibaja, psibaja@susandavis.com or 202-414-0798.

About the World War I Centennial Commission

The Commission was established by the World War I Centennial Commission Act, passed by the 112th Congress and signed by President Barack Obama on January 16, 2013, and is responsible for planning, developing, and executing programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I. The mission is to educate the country's citizens about the causes, courses and consequences of the war; honor the heroism and sacrifice of those Americans who served, and commemorate the Great War through public programs and initiatives. To learn more about the Commission activities, visit ww1cc.org/tools.

To further the mission, the Commission is leading the effort to build the National World War I Memorial at Pershing Park in Washington, D.C. to honor the 4.7 million American veterans who served. To learn more about the Memorial, visit ww1cc.org/memorial.

The Commission's founding sponsor is the Pritzker Military Museum and Library (PMML) in Chicago, Ill. PMML is a nonpartisan research institution dedicated to enhancing public understanding of military history and the sacrifices made by America's veterans and service members. To learn more about PMML, visit www.pritzkermilitary.org.

About the National World War I Museum and Memorial

The National World War I Museum and Memorial is America's leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum holds the most diverse collection of World War I objects and

documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice.

Designated by Congress as America's National World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National World War I Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.