

VFW and SVA Announce 2017 Student Veteran 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 converge on Capitol Hill, Feb. 26 to March 2, to advocate on behalf of all veterans, service members and their families. The fellowship selections were announced this afternoon at SVA's 9th National Conference in Anaheim, Calif.

"Through our fellowship program, the VFW and SVA seek to work with exemplary student veterans to hone their unique skills as advocates on campus, in the community, and on the national stage," said VFW National Commander Brian Duffy. "The VFW sees this fellowship as yet another way of supporting our shared mission with SVA to transform today's scholars into tomorrow's leaders."

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' policy areas: Success in higher education; transitioning from military to civilian life; succeeding in the civilian workforce; and crafting the future of veterans' health care. Each selected fellow submitted a policy proposal to address one of these issues through federal legislative action. In 2016, four fellows received academic credit for their experiences – a success that the VFW and SVA seek to build upon with the 2017 fellowship class.

"SVA has partnered with the VFW for the past three years to host the annual VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow program. The opportunity provides exceptional student veterans the chance to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and with other organizations in the veterans' advocacy space. We are fortunate to have a strong partner, the VFW, to offer this

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program and are grateful for their support empowering tomorrow's leaders," said SVA's President and CEO Jared Lyon, who is also a member of VFW Post 3308 in Tallahassee, Fla.

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 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 fellows will also be responsible for executing a community action plan, to include delivering their individual research papers directly to their respective congressional delegations.

The 10 selected fellows for 2017 are:

- Matthew Carbonelli, Army veteran, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Samuel Casey, Army veteran, Coastal Carolina University
- Jayson Hoffman, Army veteran, University of Illinois-Springfield
- Juwell McClendon, Navy veteran, Radford University
- Ryan McKibben, Army veteran, Florida State University
- Lisa Payan, Army veteran, Marylhurst University
- Krista Schultz, Army veteran, Eastern Washington University
- Wesley Stiner, Marine Corps veteran, University of Arizona
- Ryan Taylor, Marine Corps veteran, Florida State University
- Karthik Venkatraj, Army veteran, University of Colorado

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 Barrett Bogue from SVA at barrett.bogue@studentveterans.org.

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ABOUT STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA: SVA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit coalition of over 1,000 student veteran organizations on college campuses globally. SVA's mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation. For more information, visit us at www.studentveterans.org or visit our [YouTube](#) channel.