

VFW and SVA Announce 2018 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. (VFW) when they converge on Capitol Hill, March 4 to 7, to advocate on behalf of all veterans, service members and their families. The fellowship selections were announced during SVA's 10th National Conference in San Antonio.

"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 Keith Harman. "The VFW sees this fellowship as yet another way of supporting our shared mission with SVA to empower future 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 2017, three fellows received academic credit for their experiences – a success the VFW and SVA seek to build upon with the 2018 fellowship class.

"SVA has partnered with the VFW for the past four 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 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.

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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 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 2018 are:

- Brad Ward, Army veteran, University of Central Oklahoma
- Gabriel Snashall, Navy veteran, Wesleyan University in Connecticut
- Edward Tjaden, Army veteran, Washington University in St. Louis
- Brian Walker, Navy veteran, Northeastern University in Massachusetts
- Ryan Rehberg, Army veteran, University of North Dakota
- Joseph Sacco, Navy veteran, Idaho State University
- Hannah Joyce, Air Force veteran, Simmons College in Massachusetts
- Francheska Salazar, Navy veteran, Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland
- Jennifer Hosley, Army veteran, University of Arkansas, Ft. Smith
- Randall Dexter, Army veteran, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program continues a legacy of collaboration between the two organizations that was formalized in 2013 with a memorandum of understanding. The VFW and SVA led efforts that resulted in a massive expansion of the G.I. Bill this past year, including the repeal of the period of time a veteran must use their benefit within or face losing it. To interview any of the 10 selected fellows, contact Ken Wiseman from the VFW at kwiseman@vfw.org or Barrett Bogue from SVA at barrett.bogue@studentveterans.org.