

VFW, SVA Name 2023/2024 Student Veterans for Legislative Fellowship

Eight fellows to be the face and voice of the veteran community to elected officials in Congress

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WASHINGTON — In the collaborative program's 10th year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Student Veterans of America (SVA) have selected eight student veterans for the 2023/2024 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship.

"Veterans advocating on behalf of other veterans, service members and military families bring the kind of credibility we need in Washington," said VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento. "There is more than enough veteran advocacy work to do on Capitol Hill, and I am confident these eight fellows will meet the challenge lying ahead of each of them. On behalf of the entire VFW and its Auxiliary – Congratulations Legislative Fellowship Class of 2023/2024!"

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship is a semester-long academic experience that involves researching, coordinating, reporting and advocating on behalf of a specific veterans' policy proposal. Each selected fellow submitted a package to address the importance of veteran advocacy. In the submission, candidates were required to indicate their status as a current college student and explain how they've distinguished themselves as an emerging leader on their respective campus. The student veteran must also be an exemplary VFW member.

"SVA continues the 10-year partnership with VFW to host the annual VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship Program," said SVA National President and Chief Executive Officer Jared Lyon, a VFW Post 3308 Life member in Tallahassee, Florida. "This unique opportunity provides exceptional student veterans the foundation, knowledge and support to nurture their advocacy skills and ideas, while amplifying their voices on Capitol Hill and with other organizations in the veterans' advocacy space."

The fellows will participate in SVA's 2024 National Conference where they will join thousands of fellow student veterans. Later they will attend the VFW Legislative Conference,

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during which they will be paired with their VFW Department delegation to participate in meetings with their members of Congress to advocate for policy proposals.

The eight fellows selected for the 2023/2024 class are:

1. Alex Ortiz, Army veteran, Inter American University of Puerto Rico – School of Law
2. Alexander Thymmons, Army veteran, University of Hawaii – Manoa
3. Bryce Kyle, Army veteran, University of Texas – San Antonio
4. Jamie Springston, Navy veteran, Marshall University
5. Jason Do, Air Force veteran, Samuel Merritt University
6. Lyssa Losa, Army veteran, Texas A&M University – College Station
7. Terren Wise, Navy veteran, Brown University
8. Jennifer Ray, Air Force veteran, Southwestern College

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program continues a legacy of collaboration between the two organizations that was formalized in 2013. Since its inception, many fellows have continued to significantly impact the veteran community beyond their time in the program. Some examples are Ken Wiseman, VFW National Council of Administration member and past commander for the VFW Department of Virginia; Robert Thoen, VFW-accredited County Veterans Service Officer in Houston County, Wisconsin; and Tammy Barlet, SVA Vice President of Government Affairs.

To interview any of the selected fellows, contact VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director, Kristina Keenan at kkeen@vfw.org.