Greetings,

Thank you for RSVPing to join Student Veterans of America for Washington Week 2023, including the presentation of our policy priorities before the Joint Hearing of the U.S. Senate and House Committees on Veterans’ Affairs. We are excited to see you in Washington, DC.

The Joint Hearing will take place the morning of March 1st. At the hearing, SVA will present the organization’s 2023 policy priorities to the committees on behalf of student veterans, service members, families, survivors, and allies. These policy priorities come directly from students like you through input gained at NatCon, Regional Summits, Leadership Institute, and chapter engagements. This hearing is our annual opportunity to call attention to student veteran needs and offer policy recommendations before the lawmakers and staff in Congress who are responsible for veteran policy. Throughout your time in Washington, DC, we highly encourage you to meet with your Members of Congress and their staff to share your experience.

To help make the most of your time in Washington, DC, we are hosting a series of additional events surrounding the hearing. Join us the evening of March 1st for our kickoff happy hour event. This will be a great chance for you to connect with fellow SVA chapter members and SVA staff over food and drinks in the heart of Capitol Hill. The following morning, Thursday, March 2nd, SVA will host a Headquarters open house, which will include an office tour and light refreshments for visiting SVA chapter members. Finally, that evening, we will conclude Washington Week with a formal reception where SVA will honor some of last year’s biggest champions for military-connected students, student veterans, family members, and survivors.

To ensure your time with us in Washington, DC is as enjoyable as possible, we have included a comprehensive Event Packet with this letter. It includes a detailed itinerary of events, additional information on the Joint Hearing, a “how-to” for meeting with your Members of Congress, and a visitor guide that details local attractions and transportation options.

We look forward to you joining us in the Nation’s Capital. Safe travels!

Regards,

Jared Lyon
National President & CEO
Student Veterans of America
WASHINGTON WEEK SCHEDULE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1ST

JOINT HEARING - 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room GD-50
50 Constitution Ave NE, Washington, DC 20002
SVA testifies before the U.S. Senate and House Committees on Veterans’ Affairs.

CHAPTER TIME AND HILL MEETINGS - 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Meet with your Members of Congress or see the sights around Washington, DC.

HAPPY HOUR - 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM
Hawk N Dove, 329 Pennsylvania Ave SE, Washington, DC 20003
Network with fellow chapter members and SVA staff while enjoying food and drinks on Capitol Hill.

THURSDAY, MARCH 2ND

HEADQUARTERS OPEN HOUSE - 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
SVA Headquarters
1012 14th St NW, 12th Floor, Washington, DC 20005
Join your SVA headquarters staff for an office tour and light refreshments.

CHAPTER TIME AND HILL MEETINGS - 11:00 AM - 5:30 PM
Meet with your Members of Congress or see the sights around Washington, DC.

RECEPTION - 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM
Microsoft Innovation and Policy Center
901 K St NW 11th floor, Washington, DC 20001
Join us for refreshments while we hear from and honor some of last year’s biggest champions for military-connected students, student veterans, family members, and survivors in higher education.
JOINT HEARING OF THE U.S. SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS

DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2023
TIME: 10:00 AM - 1 PM

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room GD-50 | 50 Constitution Ave NE, Washington, DC 20002

The Joint Hearing of the U.S. Senate and House Committees on Veterans’ Affairs is an annual opportunity for veteran serving organizations to present their policy priorities for the coming year. SVA’s National President & CEO, Jared Lyon, will present testimony laying out the SVA’s policy priorities for 2023.

To better understand what to expect at the hearing, you can view last year’s hearing here. SVA’s full written testimony from that hearing can be found here.

Please arrive at 10 am. SVA staff will be staged outside the visitor entrance to the Dirksen Senate building (corner of First St. NE and C St. NE) to escort you to the testimony seating.

We encourage student veterans attending the hearing to work with your school’s Government Affairs department to schedule meetings with your Members of Congress after the hearing between 1:00 PM and 4:30 PM and the following day between 11 AM and 5:30 PM. This is a great way to connect with your elected officials and to make sure your voice is heard by those who represent you. Please reference our “How-To” guide on the following page for additional information on how to make your meeting a success.
HOW-TO: MEET YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Why meet with your elected representatives?
Because it is the single most effective way to share your story.

According to the Congressional Management Foundation’s Perceptions of Citizen Advocacy on Capitol Hill report, the most important method for influencing a Member of Congress on an issue was “In-person Issue Visits from Constituents.” Beyond that, the top two methods Congressional offices utilize to better understand constituent issues are “In-district events” and “Personalized messages from constituents.” Regardless of what you may have heard, Members care about what their constituents think and experience. Bringing your viewpoint directly to your Member’s office is the best way to engage them on the issue and motivate them to take up your mantle.

How to schedule a meeting:
1. Identify your elected officials.
   Use website links like Congress.gov, Senate.gov and House.gov.
2. Call their office using the phone number on their official website.
   You’ll likely be answered by an intern or Staff Assistant, so introduce yourself, state that you’re a constituent, and ask to schedule a meeting with the Member or relevant staffer.
   You’ll usually be given the Scheduler or Staffer’s name and email address instead.
3. Email the Scheduler/Staffer with your meeting request.
   Be concise and include your name, that you’re a constituent, a brief overview of what you plan to discuss, your desired meeting dates and times (be flexible), and how many attendees you’d like to bring.
4. If you don’t hear back in a few days, reach back out with a gentle reminder/check-in.

Before the meeting:
Research your Member.
Look at their biography, committee/ caucus membership, social media accounts, press releases, issue lists, sponsored/cosponsored legislation (Congress.gov), etc.
Be able to share your story.
Be as well-versed with what you’d like to share as possible, with knowledge of your talking points as well as responses to potential questions.
Tie your issue to the school/district/state as much as you can.
Prepare your ask.
What is it you want the Member to do? It can be anything, but make it reasonable.
(Optional) Have a leave-behind.
This is a one-pager that summarizes your most important points, materials from your school or SVA’s Annual Policy Priorities.

How to Conduct the Meeting
Go to the front desk, introduce yourself, and explain that you have a meeting with (Staffer/Member).
Once the meeting begins, exchange business cards and introduce yourself.
Thank them for their time, and anything the Member has done recently that you support.
State your ask and share your issue/message.
Answer any questions or tell them you will follow up with the requested information.
Share your leave-behind and thank them again for their time.
NOTABLE ATTRACTIONS

Entire books have been written on the many visitor attractions in Washington, DC. This is not one of those books. Instead, this is a short, curated list of notable attractions that will start you on your way to exploring the District’s amazing culture and history.

CAPITOL HILL

Capitol Hill gives visitors the opportunity to visit each branch of the federal government. If you are interested in visiting the White House, contact the office of your Member of Congress to set up a tour. The U.S. Capitol also offers tours, which let visitors see the Crypt, Rotunda, and National Sanctuary Hall. The Supreme Court is open to the public, and depending on the time of your visit, you may even be able to observe an oral argument. If you are interested in art, architecture, and history, you will want to stop by the Library of Congress. These attractions are all free and open to the public, though hours of operation differ. Please see the links below for more information on visiting each of these sites.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
SUPREME COURT
THE WHITE HOUSE
U.S. CAPITOL

NATIONAL MALL

The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of the most well-known attractions located on the National Mall. National Mall memorials, monuments, and museums are usually free and open 24 hours. The exception on the list below being the Washington Monument, which requires purchase of a ticket if you plan to enter the Monument. Please visit the National Park Service’s webpage for more information on the National Mall and Memorial Parks listed below. More information on the Smithsonian Institution’s museums, galleries, and zoo can be found here.

KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL  LINCOLN MEMORIAL
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL  NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL
WASHINGTON MONUMENT  WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL
WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL
ACCOMMODATIONS
There are many amazing options for accommodations in and around Washington, DC, but please keep in mind that all Washington Week events will take place in the heart of the District. Securing accommodations closer to downtown and Capitol Hill will make travel faster and less complicated. If you do plan to stay farther away from the action, please familiarize yourself with the many transportation options available in the District.

TRANSPORTATION
There are plenty of ways to get around Washington, DC. You can walk, run, bike, scoot, drive, or ride almost anywhere in the District. The most common ways to get around are listed below along with some information about how to make them work best for you.

METRORAIL AND METROBUS
The rail and bus services operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) offer convenient and easy access to most areas of Washington, DC. Prospective riders can purchase a SmartTrip Card online, at kiosks found at Metro Stations, or at other locations throughout the District. Consult the online rail and bus maps for additional information. Local Tip: When riding escalators in and out of Metro Stations, remember, or be prepared to be reminded, to stand to the right so others can walk to your left.

TAXIS, RIDESHARE, RENTAL CARS, AND PARKING
Taxis are available throughout the District. They all accept cash and credit. Alternatively, you can use the rideshare service of your choice. Both Lyft and Uber operate throughout Washington, DC. Parking is available but can be expensive and difficult to find. When searching for parking, it is recommended that you use a parking app to gain access to reservations, prices, and hours.

DC CIRCULATOR
The DC Circulator is a free bus service that runs 10 different routes through many of the District’s most famous neighborhoods including Adams Morgan, Dupont Circle, and Georgetown. The National Mall route provides riders with easy access to some of the most well-known monuments and museums in the District. The Circulator runs every 10 minutes, but the days and times for each route differ so be sure to check ahead of time.

WALKING AND WHEELING AROUND DC
Walking and riding bikes or scooters are some of the most affordable and environmentally friendly options for getting around the District. Sidewalks are prevalent throughout the District, and walking can be one of the best ways to see certain areas, like the National Mall. For those who prefer seeing the sights on wheels, several companies offer bike and scooter rentals. Capital Bikeshare is one of the biggest bike rental services, with a fleet of more than 5,000 bikes at over 600 stations in the Washington, DC metro area. They offer single trip and 24-hour pass options. Scooters are also a popular mode of transportation. Services are provided by companies like Bird and Lime. Remember to follow all local laws and be safe!

There is so much to do in Washington, DC and so many ways to do it. We encourage you to connect with your SVA staff for additional ideas about local opportunities or visit your favorite travel website for additional information on sites to see and things to do.

Questions?
Check out our Washington Week Webpage and the recording of our virtual info session for answers to questions, like how to set up meetings with your elected officials, what to wear, and what not to bring to federal buildings.

Still can’t find what your looking for? Reach out to SVA’s Government Affairs team directly by contacting SVA’s Policy Counsel, Justin Hauschild, at justin.hauschild@studentveterans.org.

We hope you enjoy your time with us in the Nation’s Capital!