

POW/MIA: Honor chair dedication at the state capitol

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MADISON- Every third Friday in September is Prisoner of War, Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Recognition Day in America.

Rolling Thunder Chapters and Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars will commemorate this day in 2021 by hosting the POW/MIA Chair of Honor dedication in the Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda at noon on September 17.

The Chair of Honor was unveiled last September 18 during pandemic conditions. The State Capitol was limited in its in-person attendance to ten or fewer people at the time. Along with Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Wisconsin Commander Jason Johns and Rolling Thunder Liaison from Wisconsin, Mark Herrmann, Governor Evers, unveiled the Chair with Wisconsin-Eye providing live coverage over cable network. "Now that we have unveiled this memorial, we will have a dedication for all in the state as a reminder that we still have service members that have not been returned to their families in Wisconsin," said Herrmann.

Rolling Thunder Chapters in Wisconsin conceived this project several years ago. Wisconsin Department of Revenue Secretary Peter Barca was instrumental in coordinating with the State Capitol Executive Residence Board (SCERB) to find a way to meet their high standards for emplacing anything new in the Rotunda. The project lost steam as the cost of the project, to be placed behind the existing 1933 Veterans Monument, became a hurdle. Barca reached out to the Wisconsin VFW to request cost-sharing of the project. VFW brought this to their membership, and the project became fully funded but, the stone base for the Chair would not arrive from Italy until after the third Friday of September in 2019. (SCERB standards specified that the base must be from the same quarry to match the stone of the existing Veteran Monument).

Prior to the pandemic, members of the Departments of Administration, Veterans Affairs and Revenue, and the Capitol Police planned for the dedication to occur on

Armed Forces Day, May 15, 2020. Concern over spreading COVID delayed the project again until September 18, 2020, actual POW/MIA Recognition Day. After the unveiling, the organizations agreed to have a dedication of the Chair at a time when people from all over the state could attend.

The event is now scheduled and will feature speakers WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar, DOR Secretary, Peter Barca, VFW State Commander Cory Geisler, Rolling Thunder Liaison, Mark Herrmann with Keynote Speaker Charles Konsitzke, Team Lead for the UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project.

1 st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery Regiment Command Sergeant Major, Micheal Seefeld, of the Wisconsin National Guard will dedicate this Chair in honor of the many service members still missing in action from wars since WWII.

About VFW (Department of Wisconsin)

Wisconsin VFW is celebrating its 101st year as a Veterans Service Organization currently with 26,000 members, 8,500 Auxiliary in 249 Posts throughout Wisconsin. Its mission is to serve Veterans, Military and their families in communities across the state.

About RollingThunder

Rolling Thunder is a nonprofit organization with over ninety chartered chapters throughout the United States, four in Wisconsin, to educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after all previous wars and to correct the past and protect future Veterans from being left behind should they too become Prisoners of War or Missing in Action