

AMVETS to Host Major Pro-Veterans Demonstration



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WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 20, 2019) – For the 33rd consecutive year, a massive motorcycle run will take place in the nation’s capital over Memorial Day Weekend to raise awareness of the plight of U.S. prisoners of war and the 82,000 service members still missing in action. The 2020 ride will also address the national suicide epidemic taking the lives of more than 20 military veterans a day.

After the organization that ran the first 32 demonstrations announced it would no longer hold this vital event, AMVETS announced today that it pledges to continue the tradition. AMVETS held a press

conference today, detailing plans for the 2020 demonstration ride, including a new name and an expanded mission.

At the press conference, intentionally coinciding with National POW-MIA Recognition Day and National Suicide Prevention Month, AMVETS leaders announced they will call the 2020 event the “Rolling to Remember” Demonstration Run.

In addition to demanding accountability from the government for service members missing in action, AMVETS announced the 2020 demonstration will also focus on the veterans suicide epidemic.

“There is another group of veterans and service members who are also prisoners — of a different type of war — and who also become missing in action. These men and women are fighting a war within themselves, battling to find peace and escape from

pain, guilt, depression, addiction, isolation, a lost identity, family problems, and torment as a result of trauma, in an effort to triumph over the deceptively alluring escape that suicide offers,” said AMVETS Chief Advocacy Officer Sherman Gillums Jr.

In close partnership with several other patriotic organizations, AMVETS is organizing what is expected to be the nation’s largest political demonstration of 2020 and the world’s largest one-day motorcycle event.

Three days of meaningful events in Washington, culminating with the motorcycle ride May 24, will be specifically focused on raising awareness of the issues impacting our warriors, their families and their survivors.

Events are scheduled to begin May 22. A stage will be active on the steps of the famed Lincoln Memorial from early Friday afternoon through Sunday, featuring personal accounts of these issues, notable speakers, Gold Star families and entertainment. The message will be clear throughout: we will never forget our POWs and MIAs, and we won’t stop fighting for real solutions to the suicide crisis.

“This will not be a party. It is a serious demonstration to bring awareness and accountability for POWs and MIAs left behind and suicide prevention,” AMVETS National Executive Director Joe Chenelly said. “Millions of motorcycle-riding patriots from all walks of life, from every corner of the United States, and even from other countries, have spent their Memorial Day weekends for the past three-plus decades in

our nation's capital because they want to make a real difference. This event will ensure those who take part are making a difference."

Other associated events will include a special "Blessing of the Bikes" ceremony at the Washington National Cathedral and a nighttime vigil at the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial May 22.

"We project participation in the three-day event, including many who will not be on motorcycles, to exceed a million American voters," said AMVETS National Commander Jan Brown. "We expect the number of motorcycles taking part to be in the hundreds of thousands coming in from all over the United States and even other countries."

Through funding provided by AMVETS, as well as donations and sponsorships, the ride and all associated events will be free for participants. All is open to the public and everyone interested in supporting our service members, veterans, and their families is invited.

"This collaborative effort will ensure these patriots are able to make a meaningful impact on veterans advocacy, have a dedicated route on which to ride together, safe places to park at the National Mall and to continue a renowned tradition, reviving awareness for prisoners of war and those missing in action, as well as the national

veteran suicide crisis, where an average of 22 veterans take their lives daily," Brown said.

AMVETS is crowdsourcing the inaugural patch design, inviting those who would like to submit designs to ride@amvets.org. The winning design will be announced on Veterans Day 2019.

Commander Brown also mentioned Friday that AMVETS will publish an up-to-date list showing which lawmakers are displaying the POW-MIA flag outside their offices on Capitol Hill. AMVETS expects the list to be finalized and available at amvets.org by this Veterans Day.

"The number of offices displaying the POW-MIA flag has dropped from nearly all to just about half over the past 10 years," said Brown. "That's unacceptable. Perhaps they didn't realize how meaningful and purposeful it is to display that flag. I hope that by the time 'Rolling To Remember' is upon us, 100 percent of the offices will have it up, properly."

AMVETS will also crowd-source ideas for the “Rolling to Remember” ride logo. All guidelines for the logo can be found at <https://amvets.org/rolling-to-remember-demonstration-ride/> and all submissions can be sent to ride@amvets.org. AMVETS is the nation’s largest and oldest Congressionally-chartered veterans service organization that is open to and fights for all veterans who served honorably, including reservists & guardsmen. AMVETS has been a nonpartisan advocate for veterans and their families for more than 70 years. amvets.org