

Knight named president of the elite S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame

The SCBBHOF board was also appointed and SCDNR director was named vice president

COLUMBIA, SC, UNITED STATES, August 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame (SCBBHOF), the Palmetto State's premier karate and other martial arts "honor society" has unanimously elected nationally renowned tournament fighter Marty Knight president of the SCBBHOF. Knight assumed the reigns of SCBBHOF president, Friday, Aug. 22, prior to the installation of both new and reinstalled members of the SCBBHOF's seven-man board during a brief swearing-in ceremony at the S.C. State House in Columbia.

S.C. Lieutenant Governor Pamela Evette – a longtime friend and supporter of the SCBBHOF and a

candidate for S.C. governor – met with and congratulated Knight and four attending members of the board immediately following the ceremony.

"Marty Knight has served South Carolina as great instructor who had some really outstanding students who have achieved world rankings," said SCBBHOF inductee and President Emeritus Keith Vitali. "He will no doubt do great work as president."

Fellow SCBBHOF inductee and boardmember Bruce Brutschy agrees.

"Like fellow inductee and outgoing President Mike Genova, Marty is not only a great competitive fighter, but a fantastic instructor," said Brutschy. "He's the right man at the right time as we take



Pictured (front row L-R) are Knight, S.C. Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette, Dr. Mullikin, and Col. Smith. Pictured (back row L-R) are Col. Vitali and Brutschy. Not pictured are President Emeritis Keith Vitali and President Emeritus Mike Genova. – Photograph by Jay Weaver.

the Hall of Fame to the next level honoring and enshrining forthcoming inductees as well as recognizing those within the broader society of martial artists and even those who are not martial artists but who have contributed so much to our communities.”

Members of the SCBBHOF board include Knight (president); S.C. Department of Natural Resources Director and global expedition leader Dr. Tom Mullikin (SCBBHOF vice president); acclaimed tournament fighter and fitness instructor Bruce Brutschy (sergeant at arms); retired U.S. Marine Col. Steve Vitali (consigliere); and retired S.C. Military Department Col. W. Thomas Smith Jr. (media and public relations). Smith is also a former U.S. Marine Infantry leader and a New York Times bestselling editor.



The official S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame emblem (and blazer patch) designed by Frank Braga, Custom Commitment Graphics.

Renowned Hollywood actor, former U.S. National Karate Champion and one of “Black Belt magazine’s top 10 fighters of all time” Keith Vitali (Col. Vitali’s older brother) serves as SCBBHOF president emeritus as does legendary karate fighter and karate instructor Mike Genova.

All seven boardmembers are also SCBBHOF inductees except for Smith who holds an “honorary black belt” awarded by members of the Hall of Fame – the state’s High Dan Board – in 2022.

Knight is a 10th degree black belt (aka grandmaster) as is the elder Vitali, Genova, and Brutschy. Dr. Mullikin is a 6th degree black belt as is Col. Vitali. And five of the seven boardmembers are also recipients of the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina’s highest award presented by the state’s governor. Those recipients include Genova, Dr. Mullikin, Brutschy, Col. Vitali, and Col. Smith.

The S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame was established in 2012. There are approximately 20 inductees (enshrinees) in the Hall of Fame as of August 2025.

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