

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist Named Starter of 2005 Coca-Cola 600

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- Children of NC military serving overseas will give race command
- American Idols Host Ryan Seacrest to participate in pre-race activities
- American Idols to sing National Anthem, appear at Speed Street

CHARLOTTE, N.C., May 16 /PRNewswire/ -- United States Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) will serve as the Honorary Starter for the Coca-Cola 600 NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series race on Sunday evening, May 29, at Lowe's Motor Speedway.

Among his duties, Frist will wave the green flag over the 43-car field to start the Memorial Day weekend classic -- the longest NASCAR race and one of the largest sporting events in the world. Frist will also attend the driver's meeting, address the crowd of nearly 200,000 fans, participate in the pre-race spectacular and join in the trophy presentation.

Frist has served in the United States Senate since 1994 and was elected to the position of Senate Majority Leader in 2002. As a practicing physician, he has been a leading voice on health issues and bioterrorism.

"All of us at Coca-Cola join NASCAR fans across the nation in expressing our thanks and support for the members of the United States Armed Forces who are serving to protect our freedoms in Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the world," said Coca-Cola Consolidated spokesman Lauren Steele. "It is only appropriate on Memorial Day weekend that we pay a special tribute to America's military."

"We are particularly honored to have the United States Senate Majority Leader join us in Charlotte as Honorary Starter. Senator Frist is a strong and visionary leader who has been very supportive of our troops in the war against terrorism," he said.

"It's a privilege to 'Go Racing' with NASCAR as the honorary starter for the 2005 Coca Cola 600 at Lowe's Motor Speedway," Senator Frist said. "This is the longest race of the year, and offers a unique challenge to drivers and an action packed day for fans. I'm particularly excited to share in this great American tradition with the children of America's fighting men and women. And I'm sure the folks at Charlotte will hold up their reputation as having the best pre-race show in the business. It should be a great day to go racing!"

In addition to Senator Frist, children of North Carolina servicemen and women currently serving overseas will also participate in the pre-race activities. They will be joined by top military leaders in giving the command 'Gentlemen, start your engines.'

Also, finalists from the top-rated television show, "American Idol," will sing the National Anthem and the show's host, Ryan Seacrest, will join the Idols for the pre-race activities and driver introductions. In addition, Seacrest and the American Idol finalists will appear at the Food Lion Speed Street on the Coca-Cola Stage on Saturday evening, May 28.

Coca-Cola is the Official Soft Drink of NASCAR and the sponsor of the Coca-Cola 600. The Coca-Cola Racing Family includes top drivers Greg Biffle, Jeff Burton, 2004 champion Kurt Busch, Bill Elliot, Kevin Harvick, Dale Jarrett, Bobby Labonte, Kyle Petty, Elliot Sadler, Tony Stewart and Michael Waltrip.

Tickets for the Coca-Cola 600, which includes a spectacular aerial pre-race show and a performance by the stars of "American Idol," start at just \$49 and can be obtained by calling the speedway ticket office at 1-800-455-FANS or online at www.lowesmotorspeedway.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A 300-dpi image of U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist to accompany this release can be downloaded from: www.lowesmotorspeedway.com/logos/images/billfrist.jpg

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