

**Remarks by
Roberto “Bobby” Barrera
National Commander
Disabled American Veterans
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7/7/10

Thank you for your very kind introduction. It is good to be with you this morning. I want to welcome all of you to this 89th National Convention of the Disabled American Veterans.

We have some very busy days ahead of us, but we also will have time to enjoy our camaraderie with friends and the wonderful entertainment line-up in store for us.

As I stand before you today, I realize it has been a long journey from the muddy rice field in

Vietnam where I was wounded in 1969 to this day as I complete my year of leadership of the DAV.

I have come 40 years from being a proud and patriotic Marine to National Commander of 1.2 million disabled veterans. In that time, my pride and patriotism didn't waiver – they only grew stronger.

Now my year as National Commander is coming to an end with a wealth of experience and knowledge gained. In a way, each year prepared me for the next – a constant building process that is the life experience.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to help our cause of building better lives for disabled veterans and their families.

The highlight of my term has to be being present as President Obama signed into law the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act.

Advance appropriations is something long overdue because it impacts all veterans seeking VA medical services. I am ever mindful of the efforts of all those who served before me who made this goal become reality.

Some of my most moving moments came during my visit to patients at Brooke Army Medical Center, especially those at the burn center.

My chats with some of the burn patients were emotional because in these heroes I saw myself 40 years ago.

Many times I have said that in 1969, when I thought I could not go on with my life, there was someone there to carry me.

Well, it's our turn to carry our returning troops as they and their families deal with the trauma of war. This is the DAV mission. I can assure you with all my heart that this will continue to be my mission.

Perhaps the most challenging assignment as your National Commander was testifying before the joint session of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees.

I had rehearsed my oral presentation a dozen times. I put a lot of pressure on myself by expecting perfection, because I was representing the premier veterans' service organization.

I was representing you. But the pressure I had created was greatly minimized as I received so many words of encouragement from you, my friends.

Though not perfect, it was certainly a true reflection of our goals. I was speaking to our lawmakers for all of you as one unified voice.

The most impressive moment, from a personal perspective, was presenting a baseball bat to President Obama in the White House Oval Office.

Accompanied by National Adjutant Art Wilson and then National Headquarters Executive Director Rick Patterson, the presentation thanked our Commander-in-Chief for his commitment to all veterans.

He truly went to bat for veterans with his support of advance appropriations for VA health care. Surely it would not have passed without his support.

The most heart-warming event has to be the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. The transformation of individuals unsure of their future into disabled veterans full of hope and confidence is truly a Miracle on a Mountainside. Building better lives for veterans sometimes starts here.

One of the most thrilling experiences was meeting some of our dedicated corps of volunteers as they brought comfort and compassion to disabled veterans.

They have proven that the DAV serves disabled veterans and their families better than any other veterans' service organization.

Our volunteers exceed those from all other veterans' groups serving VA medical facilities. We are the leader, without question, and setting the example with the quality of our care.

My thanks go to our volunteers, Transportation Network drivers and Hospital Service Coordinators.

And I thank each member for what you do each and every day to help our fellow veterans. With the support of our dedicated members, we have succeeded in giving comfort to those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.

I want to thank our professional National Service Officers who each day ensure that our mission is fulfilled in its most meaningful way. They are dedicated men and women who devote their lives to service for veterans.

They, along with our Department and Chapter Service Officers, are at the very forefront of service to disabled veterans.

My appreciation also extends to the Transition Service Officers who are working with our newest generation of veterans to ensure

they receive the care and support they need as they transition from military service.

Serving as National Commander, I certainly grew as an individual. This is especially true in the leadership arena.

Working with leaders like National Adjutant Art Wilson, former National Headquarters Executive Director Rick Patterson, National Headquarters Assistant Executive Director Marc Burgess and Washington Headquarters Executive Director Dave Gorman was definitely a rewarding experience.

On a daily basis, they manage our organization with a level of professionalism that is unsurpassed.

So I thank them for sharing their wisdom and leadership with me. They and their very capable staffs made my job easier and quite enjoyable. I am a better person because of each of them.

And with all my heart, I want to thank the thousands of members that I've met along this journey of six years of leadership as a National Officer leading up to your support for me as National Commander.

I have found your support spiritually uplifting, enabling me to do what must be done and what is right. Thank you for all you have given me.

I close my year as National Commander with a special thanks to all members.

You serve your fellow disabled veterans with pride and dignity, just as you wear your red badge of courage with true American patriotism.

For you the war has not ended and will never end. Service is what sets you apart from others. Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving you.

I am pleased to note that during the DAV's 90th year, our members have written a page of history that is truly a tribute to your commitment and to your resolve. With great pride and honor, I say unto you -- the victory is **yours**.

Soon, the joy and honor of leading this fine organization will pass to another worthy disabled veteran.

Despite my absence from this group of National Line Officers, I will always be here to ensure that the finest traditions of DAV service will continue.

I am honored to have had a role in maintaining the goals of this organization. I recognize that it would not have been possible without your enthusiastic and whole-hearted support.

In my years, I have been blessed with opportunities to serve a great cause -- the greatest has been the cause of this organization. It is an honor and a privilege that I will carry with me all the days of my life.

Thank you for your trust, your support and your service. I could not have asked for anything more gratifying or satisfying than to serve all of you.

Thank you and I salute you.

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