

**Remarks by  
Raymond E. Dempsey  
National Commander  
Disabled American Veterans  
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8/12/09

Good morning, and welcome to our 88<sup>th</sup> National Convention! We've got a lot to do, so it's time for us to go to work. But we also plan to have some fun, get together with old friends and make some new friends as well.

I want to begin by thanking all of you for giving me the opportunity to lead this great organization. Serving as your National Commander is a serious responsibility, but also one that I loved.

It's been a year filled with friendship, challenges, success and new points of view in how we accomplish our mission.

I have really been impressed by the terrific job done by all of you as we carry out our mission. Our National Service Officers, Transition Service Officers, Department and Chapter Service Officers, Transportation Network drivers, volunteers and our professional staff are the very best.

This has been an historic year for the DAV. Our goal to obtain advance funding for veterans health care has won full bipartisan support in Congress and has been endorsed by both President Obama and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki.

We are now looking to a future when the VA will have the sufficient, timely and predictable health care funding it needs to care for our sick and disabled veterans.

We have worked hard on this issue, and we want to thank the President and Secretary Shinseki. Their leadership and support of advance appropriations has helped make our goal a reality.

In Congress, we received nearly unanimous support in the House passing the advance appropriations bill. And the Senate is moving ahead with its version of the bill.

## **APPLAUSE**

Most of all, I want to thank you, our members. Without your support and grassroots efforts to let your elected officials know the importance of this issue, victory could not be claimed.

We look forward to the day when we will end the budget delays that have plagued the VA when Congress fails to pass the VA appropriations bill on time.

And I am pleased to note that the DAV, our members themselves, will have written a page of history that truly is a tribute to your commitment and resolve. It will be **your** victory for our fellow veterans.

Over this past year, I have come to appreciate everything the DAV does even more than ever. At the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, I saw wonderful things happen every day.

Severely injured veterans regained their sense of achievement and self esteem. They took part in sports and activities that they might never have believed possible – thanks to the DAV.

I've seen the dedication of our hospital volunteers and Transportation Network drivers. They really go the extra mile to help improve the quality of life for our sick and disabled veterans.

From the Harley's Heroes program to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, I have seen the compassion and professionalism of our NSOs and TSOs. They do a truly magnificent job in serving our nation's disabled veterans and their families – making sure they get **all** the benefits and services they have **earned** and **deserve**.

I can't tell you what a thrill it was to feel the tremendous strength of you, our members, as I addressed a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees at our Mid-Winter Conference.

I was overwhelmed by your enthusiasm and support as we presented the DAV's legislative agenda to Congress. We **all** called for our government to stand up for veterans. And Congress and the Administration got our message loud and clear, thanks to you.

**APPLAUSE**

The joy and thrill of leading this fine organization will soon pass to another. But I will still be right there with you as our incoming National Officers take the helm to ensure that the finest traditions of DAV service will continue.

I am honored to have had a part in maintaining the integrity and advancing the goals of this organization. But none of that would have been possible without your support.

Every day and in every way, all of you have reinforced my faith in our organization and our cause to serve those who have given so much for our country.

As National Commander, I had the opportunity to work with our outstanding professional staffs. Their knowledge and commitment to protect our interests and make sure that our government lives up to its responsibilities simply cannot be matched by anyone.

We are blessed to have intelligent and insightful leadership at every level to meet the challenges that we face.

National Adjutant Art Wilson is a close friend and excellent advisor. Art's wisdom and leadership are the products of a lifetime of serving veterans. His dedication and skill were a tremendous help through this year. I truly honor his friendship.

Executive Directors Rick Patterson in Cold Spring, Ky., and Dave Gorman in Washington, D.C., have provided unequalled guidance and foresight. They have enabled me to serve the needs of the DAV more successfully.

Their highly professional staffs really know how to carry out our mission every day. I can't thank them enough for their support this year.

I especially want to commend my line officers – Bobby, Wally, Don, Larry and Mary. You have done a superb job providing the kind of leadership needed to ensure we continue to be the best veterans organization in the world.

Thank you for all that you do for veterans. It has been my pleasure to serve with you.

In the future, in my role as Past National Commander and as an active DAV member, I will always be available to assist whenever and wherever I may be needed.

It has been an honor to serve as your National Commander. I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve a great cause on behalf of this great organization that few can imagine. It is an honor and a privilege that I will always cherish.

Thank you for your trust, your support and your service to our mission of building better lives for America's disabled veterans and their families. I could not have asked for anything more gratifying or satisfying than to serve all of you.

Thank you.

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