

**Suggested Remarks for  
DAV National Officers & Staff  
Representing the National Organization  
at Department Conventions and Conferences**

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**2011**

*Acknowledgment of introduction, distinguished guests, DAV and Auxiliary officers and members, as well as others in the audience.*

Thank you, [ name ], for that warm introduction, and good [morning, afternoon, evening ] everyone.

Commander Tyson and National Adjutant Art Wilson send you their best wishes for a successful and enjoyable gathering here in [ city ].

It is great to be here at your Department Convention. It is a pleasure to be among friends who share our commitment to the DAV's mission of bringing hope to our nation's sick and disabled veterans and their families.

For more than 90 years we have evolved to become the premiere veterans service organization we are today.

Our success is the direct result of the dedication of men and women like you who passionately serve and advocate on behalf of your fellow disabled veterans and their families. On the national level, we do our best to mirror the dedication and leadership you show in your communities.

**More than 250 professionally trained **National Service Officers** and **30 Transition Service Officers** as well as Department and Chapter Service Officers continue to set the standard for advocacy and representation of those we have served for generations.**

In the past year, our NSOs interviewed about **185 thousand veterans** and their families, filed **more than a quarter of a million claims** for benefits and obtained **\$5.1 billion** in new and retroactive benefits for disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors.

It takes a lot of hard work to make that level of service possible. It requires dedicated volunteers, diligent Department and Chapter Service officers and our enhanced training and certification program.

To you, I must offer my thanks on behalf of all of the disabled veterans in your community.

You are the ones who provide direct assistance to our disabled veterans – and it is you who are the face of the DAV to all those who seek our help.

To better serve veterans and help the Department and Chapter Service officers, we have more Mobile Service Offices on the road more often and longer than ever before. In the past year, ten brand new Mobile Service Offices were rolled out, updating an aging fleet.

So as we extend our excellent service to veterans, we must work to improve the quality of support we receive from our VA.

In that vein, DAV ensures that our nation is living up to its obligation to recognize their sacrifices and give them a chance to enjoy the opportunities they fought to preserve.

We are looking for serious, complete reform of the VA's claims process. We must ensure that disabled veterans and their survivors receive all the benefits they have earned, without undue delay. We cannot accept anything less.

<pause>

A giant obstruction to reform is the outdated information technology system that VA employs. We are working with VA to develop a new electronic, paperless "**Veterans Benefits Management System**" to allow claims to be processed with rules-based decision support.

It will take the combined strength of the DAV and Auxiliary memberships – again writing and calling members of the House and Senate – to see this transformation through to completion.

<Pause>

Our role in veterans' advocacy is critically important today. Every day, wounded and injured young men and women arrive at military hospitals and VA medical centers to begin their lifetime journey of rehabilitation.

At the same time, millions more veterans from previous wars still struggle with the wounds and disabilities incurred through their selfless service of our nation.

All of these brave veterans stood up to defend our nation and our freedoms.

**Now it is time for our nation to stand up for them.**

That's why your DAV focuses on an intensive grassroots effort to educate the new Congress and the American public about vital issues and the needs of families and caregivers whose lives have also been changed forever by war.

The midterm elections this past November saw drastic changes throughout Congress. More than half of the members of the House of Representatives' Committee on Veterans' Affairs lost or did not seek reelection.

About two-thirds of the new House Veterans' Affairs Committee has never been on that panel before -- meaning the task of informing them of our priorities will be more arduous than it has been for many years.

Not only are the issues ever-evolving, but we now have many members of the committee who are new to the matters at hand and unfamiliar with the veterans community.

Further, only 20 percent of the 535 members of the new Congress have served in the military. *That is the lowest percentage since World War II.*

**You** are needed to educate lawmakers about issues that are vital to disabled veterans and their families.

**You** have an essential role in our efforts – to insist that our government honors America's commitment to veterans and make veterans a national priority.

<pause>

To stay abreast of the latest issues and to know when your voice needs to be heard the most, we urge you to join the National Commander's Action Network. If you are on Facebook, follow the Commander's page at Facebook-dot-com-slash-national-commander. Or, visit the website: Stand-Up-For-Vets-dot-org.

< pause >

Speaking of *Standing Up for Veterans*, I'd like all our National, Department and Chapter Service Officers and Transition Service Officers to please stand to be recognized...

Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication at the forefront of advocacy for America's sick and disabled veterans and their families... You are the best...

<applause>

In addition to those professional services, the DAV and the Auxiliary together have more than **14-thousand volunteers** in VA hospitals and clinics.

Last year, our volunteers donated **2.2 million hours of free service** to the patients and VA.

That equates to *saving* taxpayers over **\$45.7 million** in costs if the government were to provide those services instead. We all know how important that is in the current economic climate.

Through the support of our Departments and Chapters, DAV donated – outright – **103 vans** to the Department of Veterans Affairs to transport veterans to medical appointments, and provided volunteers who made nearly **700,000 trips and spent 1.9 million hours** doing it last year alone.

Since we began our free transportation program in 1987, the DAV has purchased and donated to the VA about **24-hundred vans, at a cost of \$51 million dollars.**

I see quite a few of our volunteers, Hospital Service Coordinators and volunteer drivers here, why don't you stand up for a much-deserved round of applause...

**<applause>**

You are truly an inspiration to your community and our nation.  
You are great and patriotic citizens and a credit to the DAV.

We'd be remiss if we didn't take a moment to recognize our professional staff in Cincinnati and Washington. They are a truly dynamic team who work tirelessly on your behalf.

Art Wilson, Marc Burgess and Dave Gorman continue to make all of us proud by what they do every day on behalf of veterans at our National Headquarters in Cincinnati and our Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington.

We deeply appreciate all that they and their staffs do to fulfill our mission of service and hope.

**< pause >**

We who have become disabled as a result of wartime service share an incredible concern for the next generation of disabled veterans who will need our support.

We have a tough fight ahead of us. Thankfully, we are closer to reaching our goals as we urge these brave young men and women to join our ranks.

Let me share with you a quick list of just some of the goals we have in Washington right now:

- Reform in the Veterans Benefits Administration's disability claims process
- Proper screening and treatment for traumatic brain injury and post-deployment mental health issues
- Comprehensive quality medical services and benefits for women veterans.
- Repeal of VA and Department of Defense co-payments for medical care and prescription medications
- Legislation to provide comprehensive support services for caregivers of *all* severely wounded, injured, and ill veterans

Lastly, we recognize that our lawmakers face many challenges in the 112th Congress. Pressure is growing to curb federal spending because of the current deficit and mounting national debt.

But it is our responsibility to ensure those elected representatives understand how important it is to continue Congressional support of all VA programs and specialized health services.

We will not allow anyone to attempt to balance the national budget on the backs of veterans.

**< pause >**

I would like you to know that your leadership is as important today for our newest generations of veterans as it has ever been.

Your advocacy in your communities is the foundation on which our cause prevails. I encourage you to be guides in your neighborhoods and to look out for young veterans who need our support.

**< pause >**

Before I close, I want to remind you that our National Convention at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside is fast approaching. The dates are August 6th through the 9th.

We'll be taking care of business, but as usual, there will be ample free time for you to relax and enjoy all that New Orleans has to offer.

**< pause >**

So, as we go about our business here in [ city ] let's think about our 91-year legacy of service and hope, and consider the devastating injuries that our young men and women are surviving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They need us. And we owe them our best.

May God bless America. And, may God bless the DAV.

Thank you.

**DAV ▪ DAV ▪ DAV**