

**Remarks by
Arthur H. Wilson
National Adjutant
Disabled American Veterans
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Thank you for that kind introduction Commander. It has been a great privilege to work with you and your line officers this year.

Hello everyone. It has been an honor to again serve as your National Adjutant. I've had the privilege of leading our professional staff in some remarkable accomplishments. We have successfully met many of our goals, but there's much that remains to be done.

The credit for our achievements goes to you for supporting our initiatives. You are a powerful force, ready when called on to speak with a unified voice on behalf of veterans.

You make DAV the very **best** veterans' service organization in the world.

Together, we have won some important victories for veteran caregivers, women veterans, veterans employment, homeless veterans, veterans with mental health needs and veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury and PTSD. And we're addressing the scandalous delays in the delivery of VA benefits and much, much more.

With your support, we are working with the VA to create a streamlined claims system which is already having an effect. We've witnessed it working. Fully developed claims are moving quickly through VA review. Disability Benefit Questionnaires are eliminating the need for some physical examinations – cutting months off claim reviews. The new information technology of the Veterans Benefits Management System is replacing paper files with new electronic files that are quickly accessible and do not get lost. And these are just a few of the new streamlining systems coming on line to get veterans' claims decided quickly and done **right** the first time.

We are always at the forefront of issues that strengthen the rights and benefits for all our nation's veterans.

Yes, the VA still has a huge claims backlog. But doing the job right timely and right is the key to success.

Let me tell you why DAV is so necessary to this process. There has been a 31-percent jump in the number of service-disabled veterans since 2000. That's 3.3 million veterans from all generations who are receiving VA compensation. And it is expected that more than half of the 2.4 million veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will file disability claims. So many more will need our help and advocacy.

Our mission is the core of our organization. We meet the difficult times head-on and we are determined to deal with the challenges we face. The backlog is certainly a big one, but there are others. We need to ensure veterans get the health care they need. We must stop efforts to base compensation solely on ability to work or revise the rating schedule to reduce benefits. In our nation, we don't balance the budget on the backs of veterans. *We honor their service*

We are here for all veterans -- ensuring that their rightful benefits are preserved. They don't have to take our word for it. They will judge us by our deeds. And we welcome their judgment because DAV never has and never will let veterans down.

These veterans recognize DAV's leadership. Without the contributions of so many of you. I can't imagine trying to accomplish our mission without – please hold your applause:

- National Service Officers
- Volunteers
- Transition Service Officers
- Department Leaders
- Chapter Service Officers
- Hospital Service Coordinators
- Local Leaders
- Members
- Our great Auxiliary
- And all who make our mission possible.

Please, all of you stand for very appropriate recognition.

I'd also like to thank our entire professional staff headed by a team of program directors and managers who facilitate our mission. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention by name our executive directors; Marc Burgess at National Headquarters in Cold Spring and Barry Jesinoski at our National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

I am blessed on a daily basis to see your commitment to the success of the organization and the betterment of our cause and I would be pleased to put up our entire work force team against any other company in this country – they are the best. I think we owe a round of applause to our entire professional staff who work so hard to facilitate your good deeds.

The DAV is changing, as the following video will illustrate. But the core of our success is our commitment to ensuring our nation honors those who've served – that we are a people who never leave our wounded behind.

Join with me now to take a look back at the DAV accomplishments during the past year and look ahead to our future...

(YEAR IN REVIEW VIDEO)

I know this is a big difference for so many of us who have been looking at the DAV the same way for so many years. It's not the first time in our history we've made a bold decision. And this type of change and more intensive approach to branding the DAV that so many of you have been asking for is becoming a reality.

I know you will welcome our new logo, and that you can imagine how this new design will help us connect with veterans and the public. But there's more than just this image.

We know from research that we need to distill our identity into one that is more relevant to the public and perspective members.

Our mission statement is changing even as our purpose stays the same. We are – as we did for nearly 250,000 veterans and families last year – empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity.

We accomplish this by making sure veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

Our new slogan, fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served better explains the broad population we serve. We are still “building better lives for America's disabled veterans, their families and survivors.” But we're saying it in a way that engages our fellow citizens and speaks to the heart of our mission of service.

As individual members, Chapters and Departments, you will play a crucial role in carrying our new messages to veterans and the public. By growing our membership and building great public awareness of DAV and the work we do on behalf of America's wounded heroes and their families, we will carry forth our mission of service and advocacy into the our second century.

I am continuously struck by the depth of our advocacy and commitment. I want to thank the outstanding leadership of National Commander Don Samuels for being the inspiring and powerful leader he has been.

Commander, thank you for all that you've done this year and over year decades of Service.. You have always been a sterling asset to DAV.

You are the heart and soul of the greatest veterans service organization in the world. Thank you again for your compassionate commitment and dedication to serving our country's veterans.

There's very little we could do without the whole-hearted support of the American people. We are grateful for their loyalty and generosity to those who have served in defense of our nation. We are thankful for their encouragement to continue our mission of service and advocacy.

Before I close, there are two individuals who I must recognize and express heartfelt appreciation from all of you and me personally, Mrs. Sally Miller and Mrs. Amberly Jackson our Executive Secretaries who keep the day to day operations of this great Organization firmly on track. Thank you so much for all that you do!

This is an important year for us. The General Election this November will offer us many choices. Vote for whomever you choose; but vote. Remember the candidates who have strong records on veterans issues.

The men and women we elect this fall will determine the future of our veterans programs. We have witnessed how quickly veterans are forgotten when wars end. So, we must be vigilant for the rights of our veterans. And I know your passion for the sacredness of veterans rights isn't about protecting yourselves – but about protecting the rights and benefits of all the other veterans.

As the war in Afghanistan plays out, we must welcome our men and women home – not with spending cuts that threaten their rights and benefits, but by remembering their sacrifices with programs that will serve the needs of those who preserved our safety and liberty. We begin doing that by voting – and voting for those who we know will make a difference for our veterans.

Our elected representatives in Washington look to DAV for partnership because they know we are the strongest advocate for veterans – seeking what is right and proper, and recognizing the responsibility of government. DAV seeks to fulfill the promises made to the men and women who served. No one has earned the distinction more.

Thank you. God bless our fighting men and women across the world and God bless America.

Thank you Commander, this completes my report.

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