Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is {insert name} and I am {insert DAV position} with DAV {insert DAV chapter or department info}.

It is a privilege and an honor to be here with all of you today. This year, we recognize and celebrate DAV’s Centennial anniversary. Those 100 years of service would not be possible without people like you and your families who have made our mission possible through your support.

(Acknowledge any VIPs or other special guests)

I want to begin today by recognizing all those among us who have been a part of the great brotherhood and sisterhood we call the U.S. military—our veterans, active-duty service members, guardsmen and reservists. It is your service and sacrifice that has kept our country safe and free. If you’re able, please stand to be recognized.

***<LEAD APPLAUSE>***

No matter which branch, occupation or how many years you wore the uniform, taking the oath to serve is a brave and selfless act. It’s also one that results in few guarantees. You never know for certain where you would be called to serve, what you might be asked to do, or if you would return home in one piece—*if* at all.

Thanks to those who have served and those who continue to serve today, Americans can sleep peacefully at night. Military men and women know the risks, but they accept them wholeheartedly.

I would also like to thank your families: the mothers and fathers tearfully sending their children off to war, the spouses waiting anxiously for their loved ones to return home, the children growing up away from mom and dad, and the friends who hope for a safe return.

And, of course, we especially hold dear to us our Gold Star families, who lost loved ones in war and truly know the depths of sacrifice, service and loss.

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On Nov. 11, 1918, an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month to end the fighting of World War I.

Nearly 5 million Americans served in uniform during the Great War, and 53,500 sacrificed their lives in combat. Accidents and illness took the lives of another 63,000.

An astonishing 204,000 Americans were wounded during the war—many severely—and the government was not prepared to deal with veterans who came home ill or injured.

Not only was the government at a loss about what to do with those it had sent to war, it also had very little to spend. And the needs were great. Many returning from the battlefields had been gassed in the trenches and forever changed by the horrors and consequences of a new type of combat.

The veterans of World War I came marching home to a country unprepared to deal with the aftermath of war.

However, from this horror and hardship came hope. Cincinnati’s Robert S. Marx, a Distinguished Service Cross recipient, returned to the United States after months of rehabilitation from the injuries he suffered in the war. A lawyer before the war, he took up his practice once more and soon was elected judge.

But his sense of duty and interest in justice for his fellow veterans called him back to service. At a Christmas party in downtown Cincinnati in 1919, Marx and a small group of his fellow combat veterans planted the seeds of hope with an idea of forming an organization that would seek to improve medical care and job training for injured veterans.

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In 1920, the Disabled American Veterans of the World War, now DAV, was founded and headed by Marx, who summed up the need for DAV by saying, “We had a common experience which bound us together, and we are out to continue through an organization of our own… an organization of us, by us and for us.”

Throughout a century of service and sacrifice, DAV grew to a Congressionally chartered organization that helps more than one million veterans each year.

With 100 years of service and support, DAV continues to confront the ongoing fight for medical treatment, employment and earned benefits for America’s 4 million disabled veterans, who need our help today just as they did after the “War to End All Wars.”

A century later, we have troops deployed to combat zones around the world. Thankfully, due to the hard work and dedication from the veterans and advocates of previous generations, we’re better prepared to honor their service by helping them transition to civilian life.

Winston Churchill famously said, “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.” DAV knows its origin story and honors it with the work we do each and every day.

As we have grown, so has our voice. With more than one million members, 52 state-level departments and nearly 1,300 local chapters, we are positioned to be a positive and influential force for veterans and their families for another 100 years.

Over the last century, a lot has changed. But we continue our advocacy for veterans, caregivers and survivors on Capitol Hill. We carry on a proud tradition of fighting for Congress to adopt bills consistent with the needs of the veterans we represent.

We have evolved with the times and expanded where we can make an impact. In 2014, DAV launched its employment initiative. We released “The Veteran Advantage: DAV Guide to Hiring and Retaining Veterans with Disabilities.” The trailblazing comprehensive guide is the result of more than four years of study about what the veteran community contributes to the workforce and how hiring veterans, especially disabled veterans, can positively impact a company’s bottom line.

***<LEAD APPLAUSE>***

We’re also providing opportunities for patriotic Americans who want to give back to the men and women who defended our freedoms. DAV’s volunteer drivers have been taking veterans to and from their VA medical appointments since 1987 and have covered more than 734 million miles taking more than 19 million veterans to their medical appointments.

The release of VOLUNTEER-FOR-VETERANS-DOT-ORG has made it easier than ever for individuals to connect with veterans and honor their service. The site connects veterans with volunteers nationwide. You can register today to identify opportunities in your community.

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Our nation has made a sacred promise to care for those who have borne the battle. Connecting veterans with the benefits and care they’ve earned ensures that promise is kept.

DAV benefits advocates have helped veterans file more than 11.5 million claims for benefits since we were chartered by Congress in 1932.

***<LEAD APPLAUSE>***

As we look at our history, we see similarities the aftermath of the “War to End All Wars.” As it was then, medical advancements have saved lives on the battlefield that would have been lost in previous wars. Many of these injuries are complicated and require a lifetime of care. Yet, despite the public’s affection for its defenders, they too often face an uphill battle when they return from wartime service. We are proud to be by their side through the claims process and to protect and build on programs and benefits that help to make them whole.

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By joining this organization that was founded by World War I veterans, millions of our brothers and sisters have found a sense of purpose. That’s what DAV has done for me. It made me a part of the fight to ensure that our nation held up to its most basic promise to those disabled in service.

The unmatched dedication of veterans for their fellow veterans is why I am humbled to be a part of this ceremony today. Throughout the years, warfare has changed, the size and scope of our military has evolved, and the global presence continues to shift.

But our commitment to our nation’s heroes—has never wavered.

And just as America did 1920, it is our civic duty to remember our past and empower our future. As we celebrate 100 years of DAV and the veteran’s movement, we are calling on all Americans to help make sure DAV’s services and programs are available for the next century of veterans.

God bless you all, bless our nation’s history and its future, bless our veterans and bless the United States of America.

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