

DAV Marks 100th Anniversary of World War I

The summer of 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of World War I, which, after the fighting ended, soon saw thousands of ill and injured veterans return home to a country whose government was unprepared to care for them, their families or their future.

Several years later, veterans began banding into different groups all across the country. Former Army Capt. Robert S. Marx began to tour the country, uniting all of the separate veterans organizations under one banner, which eventually became today's DAV—veterans from all across the nation united in one cause.

The fighting began in Europe in July 1914, following the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife. This event, coupled with a series of alliances and an arms buildup across Europe, triggered the most destructive conflict in history up to that time.

When America entered the war in 1917, 20th-century technology was colliding with largely 19th-century “occupy by mass and force” tactics. New weapons such as poison gas, specialized fighter and bomber aircraft, tanks, machine guns and improved artillery contributed to the 53,000 American deaths and another 204,000 Americans wounded.

Mankind had invented new ways to kill or injure soldiers but, at the same time, military forces had improved ways to protect the combatants with things like better helmets, gas masks and evacuation procedures for the wounded.

When the armistice was signed in November 1918, America was ill-prepared for the number of wounded, ill and injured veterans who returned home.

At the time, there was no agency like the Department of Veterans Affairs solely charged with the care and rehabilitation of veterans.

Many veterans across the nation started to organize to make their voices heard, in calling for medical care and other services to meet their needs. In Cincinnati, Judge Robert Marx became a leader and champion for veterans' causes. With his flair for leadership and organizing, he formed a unique organization dedicated to the service of disabled veterans and their families. This group was known as the Disabled American Veterans of the World War.

Today, 100 years after the war that brought DAV into existence, the organization is still fighting for veterans and their families of all eras for the benefits they earned through service and sacrifice.

"The premise of DAV hasn't changed since our founding," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "The issues are a bit more complex, and the method in which we deliver our message and services has evolved with technology, but our mission of service to veterans and their families is still at the core of our existence."

National Commander Joseph W. Johnston recently wrote President Obama and Congress, urging them to reach an agreement to fully fund, in advance, all federal programs, services and benefits which directly or indirectly support America's heroes, especially those who are wounded, injured or ill due to their service.

DAV's legislative team is championing the Putting Veterans Funding First Act, S. 932 and H.R. 813, which would protect benefits and services for veterans and their families in the event of a budget stalemate during a government shutdown.

The DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) is available here for anyone to easily find their elected representatives and

contact them with a personalized letter to advocate for legislation that benefits veterans.

“In our nearly 100 years of service, some things regarding the way we conduct our advocacy efforts have obviously changed,” said Johnston. “But our values and focus on fulfilling our promises to veterans and their families of all eras is as important and vital as it was following World War I. Judge Marx’s vision lives on today, and as a war brought DAV into existence, we’ll keep advocating for those who sacrifice when the nation calls brave men and women to defend our freedom and way of life.”