

After Nearly Three-Year Struggle, DAV Helps Combat Veteran Receive Full Benefits

Wade Jensen served in the Marine Corps for 21 years until the effects of a gunshot wound sustained in Mosul, Iraq in 2005 forced him to retire.

Before he was discharged in September 2012, Jensen submitted a claim through Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD), a program allowing service members to apply for disability compensation 60 to 180 days prior to separation, retirement or release from active duty.

The Department of Veterans Affairs awarded Jensen a decision in June 2012, which partially rated the gunshot wound, but there was nothing included for the serious, disabling residual effects of the injury—the very reason for his retirement. A large portion of his claim had been deferred.

“The VA claims process is not an easy system to navigate,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “That’s why our National Service Officers are highly trained and dedicated to each and every veteran we represent. It is what our service is all about.”

Everything changed when Jensen walked into MacArthur Chapter 2 in Omaha, Neb., and learned about DAV’s free services. He was put in touch with the National Service Office in Lincoln. NSO William “Bill” VanSetten II reviewed Jensen’s case and had several concerns about the BDD claim.

VanSetten explained that the theory behind BDD is to get a jump-start on the claims process so that the benefits begin as soon as a service member separates or retires. “However, due to program backlogs, these cases can take as long as 24 months

to complete,” he said.

Like many other veterans who used the BDD process, Jensen was getting shuffled around the system. Within 120 days of Jensen electing DAV as his representative, he had a favorable decision for VA benefits that adequately addressed his level of injuries. Last December, nearly three years after he first submitted a claim, he was finally rated properly for his service.

“It started with the Lincoln National Service Office and their attention to doing an extensive interview with me and collecting as much information as possible, understanding what I was wanting in a claim,” said Jensen. “There was solid and regular communication between DAV and the VA.”

Though Jensen had already joined as a life member, he was so thankful for DAV’s service that he became a certified Chapter Service Officer. “I feel like a new person. Now I can help DAV and pay back what they’ve done for me.”



Sarpy County Chapter 47 supplies Chapter Service Officers to the Military-Veteran Services Center at Bellevue University, where DAV life member Wade Jensen (center) is enrolled as a student and volunteers regularly. Also pictured

are Military-Veteran Services Center Director J.R. Richardson, left, and Manager Sean McCullom, right.

Jensen also volunteers at the Military-Veteran Services Center at Bellevue University, where he is enrolled as a student. The center offers a variety of services, including claims support from a DAV Chapter Service Officer.

After graduation, Jensen plans to continue on the path of service. "My goal is to work assisting veterans."

Jensen understands firsthand that the transition from service member to civilian can be a difficult one. "I strongly recommend getting involved with a VSO for the camaraderie and giving back," said Jensen. "DAV is completely in tune with transitioned veterans, as well as those service members who are currently separating. I really believe in their model, which is why I volunteered to receive my Chapter Service Officer training through DAV. They are very professional, and I know that they care.

"I am a member of several VSOs, and they each have their niche and can play a part in helping the veteran understand the benefits system and how the claims process works," continued Jensen. "But when it comes to the actual preparation of a claim and the pursuit during the claim process and follow-up, it's been my experience that DAV can't be beat. They turned an untimely claim into a timely one."

VanSetten encourages veterans like Jensen who find themselves stuck in the claims process to remain optimistic and come to DAV. "Don't look at it as 'Here we go again,'" said VanSetten. "DAV has a different approach—very thorough, highly trained, and the NSOs are all disabled veterans, and we have been on that side of the table and can relate to what the veteran is

going through.

“Many veterans I see have situations similar to Wade’s. They come to us after numerous setbacks and finally get the benefits they have earned and are entitled to,” said VanSetten. “Helping out veterans like him is my bonus. Most people think of a financial bonus, but helping fellow veterans is what keeps me going.”

“Wade Jensen’s sacrifice to our nation is clear and evident to us all. Helping him receive the full benefits he’s earned is our job and a pleasure,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. “His case is a testament to the training and dedication of NSO VanSetten and all of our Service Officers nationwide.”