DAV provided testimony calling for increased caregiver benefits and more

DAV provided testimony on several bills under consideration in the House of Representatives in late April. DAV Assistant National Legislative Director Shurhonda Love told lawmakers that DAV supported the Support Our Military Caregivers Act (H.R. 3989) in accordance with DAV’s resolution calling for legislation to provide comprehensive support and services to caregivers of all veterans severely injured, wounded or ill from military service.

The measure would establish an external review process in cases where VA caregiver benefits were either revoked, inadequate or denied, and it would ensure that once a review is requested a decision would be required to be completed within 120 days. Love noted that DAV has long had concerns with the VA’s Comprehensive Caregiver Support Program, including the seeming lack of due process and transparency in the decision and appeal process for applicants. Early on, DAV identified the need for an independent mechanism where (1) a caregiver can appeal a clinical team’s decision; (2) that decision can be carefully reviewed from the beginning; and (3) an unwarranted decision can be reversed, altered or sent back to the clinical team with instructions to reassess or consider additional issues.

Love also testified about legislation designed to increase the availability of adult day health care services for severely disabled veterans (H.R. 2460). Under current law, veterans who require nursing home care due to a service-connected disability or who have a VA disability rating of 70 percent or more can receive full-time nursing home care inside a state veteran home at no cost; however, the law does not allow those
same severely disabled veterans to benefit from adult day health care, which is a less costly and noninstitutional alternative many prefer. This measure would amend existing law to authorize the VA to pay state veterans homes a per diem rate that is 65 percent of the per diem otherwise payable for full-time skilled nursing home care for these same severely disabled veterans.

“Adult Day Health Care is a program for veterans who need assistance with activities of daily living, nursing services and case management. It is also beneficial for veterans with caregivers who may be experiencing isolation from their own lives and need respite from the constant care of their loved ones,” Love testified.

Adult day health care, which is currently offered by only three state homes, provides comprehensive medical, nursing and personal care services combined with social activities for physically or cognitively impaired adults. Adult day health care allows severely disabled veterans who need skilled nursing services to receive them several times a week while continuing to live at home.