A fresh start to a new year

The start of the 115th Congress is an opportunity for new beginnings, and this year in particular there will be new leadership in Washington. President-elect Donald J. Trump becomes our nation’s 45th president. Republicans will maintain control of Congress, but three of the four leaders of the Senate and House Veterans’ Affairs Committees will be new to their positions. With the Department of Veterans Affairs continuing to pursue generational reform and transformation, it is more important than ever that veterans’ voices are heard loud and clear.

It is our responsibility to approach this transition period in government with continued vigilance as we look for opportunities to advance our legislative priorities with both the new administration and on Capitol Hill. Although many of the people we work with may change, DAV’s core mission and policy priorities remain the same. One of our first tasks will be to educate the administration and Congress on critical legislation required to ensure we keep the promise to America’s veterans. We’ve already met and will remain engaged with Trump’s transition team and policy people, as well as the new committee leadership.

The work we do here in Washington will only be as successful as the strength of our grassroots support across the nation. We will call on the president-elect and his new administration to keep his promise to veterans by strengthening, reforming and sustaining the VA health care system. We will push Congress to take up the many veterans measures left pending at the end of the 114th Congress, including important legislation supporting caregivers and women veterans. We need you—our members and our voice—to join with us in this fight. As part of our overall advocacy campaigns, we will be relying on our Benefits Protection Team leaders and grassroots network to help us drive communications and pressure Congress to do
what’s right for veterans.

While we will be engaging with Congress and the new administration regularly, our big advocacy push will kick off at **DAV’s Midwinter Conference**, which convenes at the end of February. During that time, we will join together to urge our lawmakers and policymakers to follow through with legislation that falls in line with our top priorities: ensuring veterans have access to high quality and timely health care through VA health care and appeals reform; supporting the spouses and families who care for our veterans every day; meeting the gender-specific and unique needs of women veterans; helping veterans with disabilities find meaningful employment; and providing timely and effective mental health services for veterans, which is essential to ongoing suicide prevention efforts.

Please join us in Washington to support Commander Dave Riley as he testifies before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committees on Tuesday, Feb. 28. Your voice is critical, and with a united effort we can achieve our legislative goals.