Meeting our current moment

While no one could have predicted just how turbulent this year has been, we couldn’t be prouder of everyone at DAV for adjusting, adapting and overcoming the string of challenges we’ve faced in the wake of this pandemic.

In March, many states began locking down their economies to help stop the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. And the worst public health crisis in more than a century was quickly entwined with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

From the early days of the pandemic, it was clear that veterans are not immune to the financial hardships rattling our nation. In countless cases, veterans have lost jobs, had their hours cut or orders canceled, or otherwise lost wages.

That’s why DAV launched the COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Fund. Veterans who are economically impacted by the pandemic can apply for free, one-time $250 grants. All that’s required is verification that the veteran has a service-connected disability and proof of lost employment or income as a result.

We’ve already processed over 9,500 applications and distributed funds to those in need. Keep in mind the applications are approved on a first-come, first-served basis while the funds remain available, and the grant is limited to one veteran per household.

We’ve also had to implement procedural changes to adjust to our new normal. First, all DAV offices remain closed to the public. However, our dedicated staff and employees continue to work diligently to help our veterans fight for the benefits they’ve earned in service to our nation.

DAV national service officers are continuing to process claims for benefits. They’re conducting virtual hearings—at times
from home—fielding veterans’ emails and phone calls. Veterans can always email directly with one of our national service officers by going to benefitsquestions.org.

We’ve also instituted a new temporary hotline that veterans can call to speak directly to a service officer about their claims. Veterans can call 888-604-0234 Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. EST.

Air Force veteran Richard Oliner called the hotline in July looking to increase his VA rating. On the other end of the phone was National Service Officer Nancy Casey at the DAV office in San Diego. One day after Oliner picked up the phone, his claim was approved, substantially increasing his rating.

Oliner was particularly delighted to hear that, with his new rating, his spouse would be taken care of should anything happen to him. That kind of peace of mind is just one example of what is possible, even in the uncertain age of COVID-19.

DAV is looking forward to a more healthy and prosperous year in 2021. But no matter what the future brings, we’ll be there every step of the way, assisting veterans in navigating the often-murky waters of applying for VA benefits.