

DAV passes \$2 million in distributed COVID-19 unemployment relief

8,000+ veterans, families assisted during crisis

As measures to help prevent further spread of the coronavirus unfolded across the country in spring of 2020, DAV established a COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Fund to provide financial aid to service-connected disabled veterans who have lost employment or small-business income in the wake of the outbreak.

In the past ten months, the fund dispersed well over 8,000 checks totaling over \$2 million to veterans in-need. This is an average of more than 25 relief checks per day and 800 per month to ease the financial burden felt by so many.

“On top of the additional health risks our wounded, ill and injured veterans face with this virus, thousands of disabled veterans have been and are continuing to be laid off or have had to close their small businesses due to the pandemic,” said DAV National Commander Stephen “Butch” Whitehead. “DAV has remained dedicated—as we have for more than 100 years—to assisting our heroes who are desperately struggling to make ends meet during this unprecedented time.”

When Dawnelle Boles, a service-connected disabled Navy veteran and single mother, suddenly lost her income due to the pandemic, DAV’s COVID-19 relief fund provided critical assistance when she needed it most.

“It fed both of us and allowed us to get the basic necessities that people take for granted, such as toothpaste and laundry soap,” said Boles. “This program gave me a little hope right now and I cannot thank you enough!”

Air Force veteran Amber Frymark watched as income from her small business slowed during the pandemic. Meanwhile, business insurance, storage fees and administrative costs remained unchanged.

“The DAV relief fund enabled me to pay some of my disabled veteran small business bills,” says Frymark. “DAV’s faith in me has empowered me to empower other veterans.”

Richard Lilljedahl, a retired disabled veteran of both the Army and the Navy, watched as his family-owned business felt the financial squeeze of the pandemic. With two teenage children, one in college, the relief grant mattered to him and his family.

“This has been such a challenging time, and words cannot begin to express the thanks I send to DAV on behalf of myself, my wife and my two children,” Richard wrote in a thank-you message to DAV. “Your assistance during this extremely difficult time in our lives has helped our family so much and has taken a massive weight off mine and my wife’s shoulders.”

The grants, which have been made possible through generous donations from the American public and corporate sponsors, have helped our nation’s veterans pay bills, obtain food and provide the basic needs for their families during this difficult and uncertain time.

“We are incredibly grateful for all of the generous donors who have made this relief possible,” said Whitehead. “While we don’t know when this crisis will end, but we do know that we can make a life-saving difference for our fellow veterans and their families with these grants.”

The application for relief can be found at [DAV.org/COVIDrelief](https://www.dav.org/COVIDrelief). Veterans will need to fully complete the application and provide documentation verifying their status as a service-connected disabled veteran who has lost employment as a result of the pandemic. Disabled veterans who

are small business owners or who work independently and have been negatively impacted financially as a result of the virus may also be eligible for this assistance.