



**FULFILLING OUR PROMISES**  
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

Remarks of  
J. Marc Burgess,  
National Adjutant  
To the  
Delegates of the 93<sup>rd</sup>  
DAV National Convention  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
Saturday, August 9, 2014

---

Thank you Commander. Thank you, everybody.

I am honored and humbled to serve as your National Adjutant.

As you can well understand, the last year has been one of growth and challenge.

We have been entrusted with the incredible legacy of DAV, and no matter the obstacles we face, our purpose and mission do not change. Nor does our commitment waiver.

It is that commitment that has cemented our place among veterans advocates, and our body of work that has earned a reputation as a strong and influential advocate for veterans' rights.

Our reputation has been forged through the commitment of our members, our camaraderie and dedication to service. It demands that we strive even harder in helping those who served to overcome great obstacles as they reclaim their lives after service.

Now it's time to give you all a brief highlight of DAV's last twelve months of service and advocacy. This has been an incredible year of growth for our organization, and it's one we can all be proud to have been part of. With that...let the show begin.

I think we can all agree that this has been another spectacular year for DAV and for the men, women and families we serve. There have been some big moments for this organization, and no doubt, there are many more to come.

But none of it would be possible without the continued dedication and hard work you all contribute on a daily basis. It's those day-to-day moments that help us create a year of exemplary service to veterans. Thank you for all you do.

It is most important, I think, to look at these images and reflect on the heart of what it expresses. The heart of DAV – the backbone of what we are able to do – lies in the men and women in the field who make our services and mission of hope possible.

It is because of that dedication that we have been able to represent more than 330 thousand benefits claims for veterans and their families in the past year.

It is because of that commitment that nearly one million veterans have entrusted us with their powers-of-attorney for those claims. No other veterans service organization will come close to that in our lifetimes, and that is an enviable record that we should all be exceptionally proud of.

But we want to raise the bar. Through the continued training and hard work of our Chapter, Department, Transition and National Service Officers, we continue to improve and build a legacy of hope that empowers and enables veterans to enjoy the American Dream they fought to defend.

They are the best because they have an unmatched commitment to veterans, and we will continue to give them the tools and education they need to operate at their absolute peak.

If you're a service officer, please stand up and let us all give you a big round of applause.

DAV is also a leader in the realm of veterans' advocacy. We garner tremendous respect among lawmakers, their staff members, as well as the leaders within VA that we work with day-in and day-out in Washington. This is a credit not only to the professionalism and experience of our staff, but our expertise in veterans affairs and the strength of our grassroots advocacy network.

We work hard to keep our members well informed about veterans issues, and when we ask for your support we find you are eager to lend it. Your continued active engagement in these grassroots efforts will ensure DAV remains a powerful voice for veterans.

And let us never forget – as you saw in the video – our true north always points back to veterans and their families.

At the Department and Chapter levels, all across the country, our members are touching lives through their volunteer efforts.

It could be serving as a volunteer driver through the DAV Transportation Network, volunteering time to visit injured and ill veterans at VA hospitals or nursing homes, or just lending a hand to those in the local community.

We see this spirit of compassion, of giving, of veterans serving veterans, and it is a heartwarming inspiration to us all.

Clearly, DAV nationwide is on the move. Every day I see the reports in the media and our stories are being told:

Stories like those of Chapter 16 in North Carolina, whose active members are developing community partnerships to address and prevent homelessness.

Or Chapter 12 in San Bernardino, California who partners with Home Depot to improve living conditions for needy veterans and builds gardens in their community to bring them together and provide creative rehabilitation.

And Chapter 2 in Youngstown, Ohio, where veterans are teaming up with other charities to provide a mobile food pantry for veterans in need.

The stories come in daily. And they only cover a fraction of the great initiatives that are making DAV a household name in communities nationwide. I try to reach out and thank you when I hear these great reports, but I know I'm missing a few 'thank-yous.' We have departments trying new and innovative programs based on need and stepping up in times of natural disasters to ensure our own are not left behind.

If you volunteer for DAV or the Auxiliary, in any capacity, please stand up to be recognized and recognize your fellow heroes who make our organization work!

We recognize that there are core areas we need to maintain and strategic areas where we need to build. It is a great tragedy that it has cost more than 6,000 lives in recent wars and a miscarriage of justice to our Vietnam veterans to change the American public's views on veterans.

Little can remind us more of that sacrifice than the Always Lost exhibit that joins us here at our Convention.

The fight to care "for he who shall have borne the battle, his widow and orphan," and to separate the war from the warrior has come at a heavy price to you in this room.

Over the course of the last nine decades, DAV has seen the public's affinity for its veterans ebb and flow. We've seen the parades. We've seen every kind of homecoming one could imagine.

And now, with the perspective of history on our side, we can see many different roads this relationship could take in the coming years.

It can change. It *will* change.

Though the public may by and large be ready to send their young off to war, they rarely consider the full cost of the battle. When the shooting stops, so does much of the attention paid to the warrior, whose battle toward recovery can last a lifetime.

Now is a time when we must harness the patriotism shared by our public and build a relationship with the American people that turns the moment's good will into an enduring future of compassion and advocacy for those who served.

I'm humbled to be among you and serve as your national adjutant. And while I couldn't be more proud of our accomplishments, I know it's the hard work of the many in this hall and the many more you represent who made it possible.

I'd also like to recognize my staff. With feedback and support from our membership, we've challenged our team members for several years now to take DAV to a new level and we've made tremendous strides this year.

I'm blessed to have -- as heads of every department -- and under the superb leadership of Executive Directors Barry Jesinoski and Garry Augustine -- innovative and strategic leaders. They are finding new solutions to serve our core functions and support the folks in the field who make things work.

At every level, at every office and headquarters, we're blessed to have professionals who understand the importance of our mission and respond with dedication and passion.

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to serve. And thank you, Commander, for your leadership and guidance.

This concludes my report.