



**Remarks of Barry Jesinoski, National Headquarters  
Executive Director  
94<sup>th</sup> DAV National Convention  
Sunday, August 9, 2015  
Denver, Colorado**

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen. National Commander Hope, guests and delegates to our 94th National Convention, it's certainly my privilege to share what's going on at DAV National Headquarters with so many of you who make our cause possible through your tireless efforts.

I want to thank Commander Hope and Adjutant Burgess, whose support and confidence have fueled a giant leap forward in the evolution of our movement this year.

It is important that you, the dedicated people who stand at the helm of our great cause, know that we share your passion. We understand the fight. We share your values.

We know the cost of war. And it is for the sacrifices of those who came before us that we dedicate our service in DAV. But yet, we as a nation must constantly be reminded. Our stories must be told. Like the story of a personal hero of mine, Dr. Lester Tenney, who we caught up with this year... <Lester Tenney Video played,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPbAd1TUGJA>>

People like Lester Tenney have earned our respect and his words highlight the sacred need for our unity and purpose. We can only hope that – in honor and deed – we pay them a fitting and proper tribute.

I believe we have done so this year. DAV is again on the move. As we have noted, DAV crested 1.3 million members at the close of the year. With your help, it's quite possible that we will end 2016 with a **sustained** membership of 1.3 million veterans. That's noteworthy because of how unusual it is among member organizations nationwide – in particular – established veterans service organizations who are struggling.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize someone who has lead DAV's efforts in this area for many years.

Tony Baskerville, our National Membership Director, retired this year after four decades of dedicated service and multiple accolades.

Tony started as a national service officer in 1975 and early on was instrumental in DAV's homeless outreach. He was mentored early in his career by renowned DAV leader Jesse Brown and was later recognized by the NAACP with the Jesse Brown Outstanding Leadership Award.

While Tony's stewardship of DAV's membership system is exemplary, he would be the first to say that the primary reason for our success in recruiting is our commitment to service. It demonstrates our value. It inspires people to join. It's the most important factor affecting our growth.

Service – giving back to those who served – will always remain our foremost call. DAV members remain the most dedicated, meaningful volunteers in the nation.

DAV leads transportation efforts and in-hospital volunteerism. And we're just starting to see and measure the impact of non-traditional volunteer efforts as more and more departments are logging Local Veterans Assistance Program hours.

At the same time, across the board we – along with every volunteer organization in our sector – are seeing a decline in volunteerism as we bridge generations. Many of our World War II veterans like Lester Tenney are no longer able to drive but require our assistance. More baby boomers are working longer. This has a diminishing effect on how many of our most valuable volunteers are available.

It means fewer drivers. It means more competition for the willing few who are able to make a significant volunteer commitment. It also means more work for those who are already committed.

This is one of many challenges we face. But we must truly consider the cost of us falling short.

We'll look for ways we can support media outreach to recruit volunteers. We'll seek new ways to make students aware of the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship. And we'll work with you on projects and initiatives that help us gain ground in spite of the challenges before us.

To improve our efforts to attract and retain volunteers and active members, we must improve our ability to communicate both within our ranks and to the public. We have to be able to mobilize and engage as a body of members. To my mind, I expect that we at your National Headquarters hold the highest standards for efficiency, accuracy and integrity that mirror your work in the field.

And we should provide you with the support and resources you need to amplify our efforts in your communities.

We're doing more than ever before to get the word out about DAV. That includes our involvement with partners like the History Channel. Last year, working together at Veterans Day, Commander Hope represented us well as he joined American Pickers star Mike Wolfe. <American Pickers Video played, <http://www.history.com/shows/american-pickers/videos/vietnam-veteran-pick-along>>

When it came to the media, DAV practically owned Veterans Day last year. That weekend, we hosted the *DAV 200: Honoring America's Heroes*. This Nationwide NASCAR series race was held in Phoenix.

The opportunity came to us on fairly short notice, but we'll be doing it again this year and we'll give you, at the very least, the opportunity to tune in and, we hope, a jump in awareness for DAV through the race in your communities. We anticipate a greater reach and are looking to a corporate partner to help us spread the word about DAV.

For those of you who weren't able to make it, here's a quick look at last year's race...  
<DAV 200 video played, <https://vimeo.com/133099739>>

At the same time that the race and History Channel content was running, we'd developed a new resource you're going to hear a lot more about in the coming year.

The DAV "Thank A Vet" program gives anyone who has three photos and five minutes the ability to develop a touching electronic message honoring their loved one. Last year was really a pilot year for the program, but with a little effort we quickly found our audience could produce more than 2,200 videos leading to 70,000 unique page views.

Let me show you a quick illustration of how this dynamic resource works...

It's very sharp. And we think it has real potential to carry DAV's message to an exciting new audience.

Mike Wolfe pitched the program in a video about his grandfather who served in the Navy. Country artist Craig Morgan, himself an Army veteran, leant his newly produced song, "If Not Me," to the cause. It's one of those things you really have to experience to understand...

This contributed to our efforts to reach people through our social networks, where we reached a new landmark. DAV eclipsed one million Facebook followers last month and was rated by Facebook as the top veterans service organization page.

Our Twitter numbers topped 30,000 and we'll continue this outreach and work to ensure it helps our core mission and Chapters and Departments to achieve your goals. By this time next year, we believe we'll have more than 1.3 million Facebook followers, exceeding our traditional membership total. It is a vibrant, engaged community where our members are extending our message and getting the word out about our services.

As all of this is going on, we continue to push for ways to secure new streams of financial support that fuel our mission and educate and inform the public. That includes Direct Response Television. This year, we took a closer look at these messages and worked to enhance the emotional draw of our piece – something we feel is making a more lasting impression on prospective donors and the public.

We want to build relationships with the public. And we feel this type of message has that effect. We need people to understand and connect with injured and ill veterans as well as their families. We want people to commit and become recurring donors, and we want them to feel connected to the charity they are supporting.

We've held DAV 5K Walk/Run/Roll events in Cincinnati and San Diego and are adding Atlanta this fall. Next year, we'll add two more 5Ks to **Tulsa and the Virginia Beach/Tidewater area**) and work to further perfect these exciting events. If you get a chance to go to a 5K, I'd encourage you to do it. It's another one of those things you have to experience to fully appreciate, but when you do... <DAV 5K Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqtgurl1JGQ&list=PLUHbfbDZQkcxyZjlsk8lYt599QZiQM3Q&index=1>>

As most of you know, these aren't the only new programs DAV is undertaking.

It's hard at this stage to believe that DAV's employment department is in its infancy and what it is growing to become. We will have sponsored more than 100 all veteran career fairs by the end of this year. In that time, we will have facilitated the job fair experience around 40,000 times for veterans, military members and their spouses.

We're looking at ways we can improve the resources we provide job-seeking veterans so we can empower them to meet their full professional potential – in spite of the challenges they may face as a result of military service.

The growth and ambition we've showed in the past year are a credit to many staff members and you in the field who support our programs of service. I'm proud that we've become more efficient and have focused on accuracy in all we do.

That said, I'm most proud that we are doing things the right way. We're upholding the standards of integrity that are the hallmark of the reputation our organization has built up for nearly a century. We're following a disciplined strategy. We're making calculated decisions and our efforts are paying off.

All the while, we have the foresight to know that DAV's success requires a national movement that goes well beyond the ground we hold in our headquarters buildings or chapter halls. Like you, we're working hard. And we're not hiding our game plan. We want you to know how everything works.

Because if a 5K can succeed in Cincinnati, there's probably something we can do in San Diego that will replicate that success. And if it works in San Diego, we'll probably learn a new trick we can apply to Atlanta.

There are no secret recipes here. We're not interested in creating one exotic dish or success story to be shared among a few. We want a thousand cooks who can take the ingredients they have where they live and replicate the recipe to make DAV a household name in their communities.

We're trying to give you more to work with. Whether that means training we make available online or support for media relations and special events – we're an email, text, Facebook message or call away. And when you call, we want to help.

I'd ask that you take advantage of the tools and resources we're putting out there. While you're here, go to the seminars we're putting on. When you get back home, get online and check out the ones you might have missed. And be a convention ambassador. Remind your fellow members where they can go to get the scoop.

When you do and as you put plans into action, tell us what's working. Tell us if there's something we can do to refine our approach. We are vested in your success and share your values. We understand that our organization sits at a critical junction in terms of our future.

And we know what is at stake. We will not collectively or individually leave one of our own behind. We share your passion for our cause. We understand the people we're fighting for and with...

People like Alan Babin, who became DAV's Freedom Award recipient in Snowmass this year...<Alan Babin video, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNrF\\_f6uSUE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNrF_f6uSUE)>

We're moving forward. As Alan said, "You can't go to the past and change it." But we're trying to make the future a little better than it is now for people like him, and people like you.

Thank you for all you do. And thank you for making DAV better every day.

Thank you Commander. This concludes my report.

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