



**Remarks of Ron Hope, National Cmdr.
94th DAV National Convention
Saturday, August 8, 2015
Denver, Colorado**

Hello everyone!

Adjutant Burgess, Executive Director Augustine, Executive Director Jesinoski, fellow veterans, families and friends and honored guests thank you so much for that warm welcome.

To say it's been a banner year for DAV is an understatement. You all have so much to be proud of.

As most of you know, I was a National Service Officer for 31 years. I know firsthand how important the work is that our Chapter Service Officers do. If you're a CSO, raise your hand.

There are a few other people whose contributions are the boots on the ground that keep DAV running. If you are a Department Service Officer, raise your hand.

If you're a National Service Officer or a Transition Service Officer, please raise your hand.

If you have a leadership position in your local Chapter or Department, raise your hand.

Hospital and community volunteers and DAV Transportation Network drivers, where are you?

Thank you for all you do. Trust me, it does not go un-noticed. Thank you for your continued service to veterans.

DAV is a strong organization because we know that the sacrifices made by veterans are inevitably shared and family members deserve our utmost consideration.

In the past, we've seen proof of the strength we possess when DAV and our auxiliary work together to hold our lawmakers accountable.

As many of you know, this year DAV and the DAV Auxiliary once again pushed Washington to do the right thing by securing benefits for caregivers of veterans for all eras.

We marched on the Capitol again this year just like we did in 2014. And, again they listened. In fact, and I've shared this story with some of you this year but I love telling it, we were so determined to ensure they heard us coming we were actually stopped by the U.S. Capitol Police.

I guess we were a bit loud.

But guess what? When they found out who we were and why we were there, they decided they had other important business around the corner. And then they thanked us for our service.

Now, let's put that in perspective for a moment.

These police officers turned a bunch of determined veterans loose on Congress! Now that, folks, is what I call a good day!

One of the main reasons that inspired us to get a little bit loud on Capitol Hill is something close to all our hearts – it was the people who never served in uniform but have dedicated their lives to serving those who have.

The Veterans Affairs Family Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act we support would open the VA caregivers program to all severely wounded veterans of any era who, because of their sacrifice, now have loved ones ensuring their needs are met. We cannot, and will not, forget the families of service members who are often behind the scenes and overlooked. In my mind, this must stop and stop **now**.

The family caregivers program provides many levels of support to caregivers of injured veterans.

There are people in this room that have some very real experiences with being caregivers for their loved ones well before the events of 9/11.

This is simply the right thing to do and I have, like several of you, told Congress that. But my voice alone is not enough. I need your help.

I hope you'll join me in writing, calling or e-mailing your elected officials and tell them you expect this legislation to be enacted.

Ladies and Gentlemen, make no mistake about it, you are part of a growing organization. We are edging ever-closer to a sustained membership of 1.3 million.

We are on the move! I attribute this to you and the work you're doing in your communities on behalf of fellow veterans.

Many of you have started your own outreach programs and are reaping the fruits of that labor. Some of us are talking to community leaders and other supporters. The word is getting out that DAV is **the** Veteran's Service Organization for veterans of all eras and their families.

For those of you I've had the privilege to visit this year, you may have seen this before but I'm going to ask you to indulge me once more. Would all of our women veterans please stand, if able?

I'm very proud, as you should be, of your service and to stand beside you as a veteran.

As many of you know, this year DAV released a very comprehensive report concerning the gender gap in health care for women veterans as compared to their male brethren.

I've spoken with Secretary McDonald on this issue and he says he's committed to getting this fixed. But, until it's completely and fully addressed, DAV will continue advocating for America's women veterans, I can promise you that.

Some of you have mentioned that you saw me on our public service announcement with Mike Wolfe from the History Channel's American Pickers series.

When people become aware of what we do, they start to love us. Mike was no exception. I asked him to give us a brief shout-out while he was in Washington, D.C. filming our segment for next year...<Mike Wolfe Video played>

It has been an absolute honor to represent our organization at a time when we are growing and on the move. This illustrates how wide our net is being cast these days. Our message about services to veterans and their families is being seen and heard now more than ever.

Secondly, I'll share with you something else: TV isn't as easy as it looks. I'll bet they filmed Mike Wolfe and me walking into that barn at least twenty times!

It has been my absolute privilege to be your national commander and represent you this year. Meeting many of you in my travels was an honor I will never forget and certainly the highlight of my tenure.

I would take this opportunity to thank the members of the Department of North Carolina. You have been my steadfast support, my friends and comrades these many years. I could not have accomplished my duties as national commander without you. Please stand and be recognized.

We've done great things, but there's much more to be done. We must never have a mission stoppage.

We must continue to remain a strong organization in order to be the organization that veterans and their families know they can turn to. I hope you leave here energized to return home and engage veterans in your community and bring them on board. The bonds of kinship we all knew while in uniform remain with us here and it's my steadfast belief potential members will find this organization extremely welcoming.

You have my respect, my commitment and my lifelong friendship.

Now, in a long time gesture that's part of our military heritage, I hope you will do me the honor of offering you my salute for all you do to keep the promise for our veterans, their families and survivors.

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