



David W. Riley
National Convention Remarks
July 29, 2017
New Orleans, Louisiana

Hello everyone! Welcome to the Big Easy!

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

Last year in Atlanta I was clear that things were going to stay busy for DAV. There was, and still is, much work to do. I've worked with many of you over the past year ...so let me hear from you. DAV, were we busy this year?

You bet we were. But before we talk about that, let's recognize our folks who are out there on the front lines every day.

If you're a national, chapter, department, or transition service officer, please raise your hand.

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

Thank you so much for your hard work. And thank you to all of our chapter and department leaders. You keep DAV strong and your service to veterans and families is vital to our mission. Let's put our hooks together for your hard work!

We have a lot to be proud of as we reflect back from last summer to now.

We were indeed busy people. In Atlanta I asked for your help in furthering our mission of providing a lifetime of support to veterans and their families.

And I have to thank you all. Together, DAV has accomplished many things. And we have much more to do as our mission continues.

There are nearly one-point-**three** million of us in DAV. I'm very proud of that and you should be as well. Last year, our charity secured *more than* **\$4 billion dollars** in new and retroactive earned benefits for veterans and their families.

That's "**billions**" – with a *capital* "B."

Our message of service this past year was seen on *Good Morning America*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, *World News Tonight* and heard numerous times on national television, radio and even on billboards across the country.

Our local chapters remain the go-to voice for veteran related issues in their communities. DAV's message of continued service to veterans and their families is being told now in more places than ever – and through your work the voices of ill and injured veterans are being heard.

We are continuing our advocacy on behalf of **women veterans**. The voices of women veterans are sounding off louder than ever. *Sisters-in-arms*, let me **hear** you – tell New Orleans you're with us!

Something near and dear to my heart is continuing to champion our cause for support for caregivers of **all** generations. We should **not** allow lawmakers to limit it to post 9/11 veterans.

Unless you experience what people like Yvonne go through every day, you can't fully appreciate the sacrifices they make. It meant a lot to me to stand up for her. She does so much for me.

So, earlier this summer, we gave a couple DAV cameras an all access tour to the real world of my favorite veteran caregiver...

Yvonne, you have been my rock for more than two decades. Without you, there would be no way for me to serve. Without your love and partnership, there'd be no joy in my life. Without you, this year would not be possible.

And **damnit**, *we're not going to stop fighting for equal treatment for you and **all** of our caregivers until justice is served.*

Thanks to our members, DAV has a lot to be proud of but there is still much more work to do.

We must remain strong to be the organization that fellow veterans, their families and supporters turn to when a veteran is in need. DAV must remain *the thought-leader* on Capitol Hill. We must continue our efforts in addressing veteran employment; especially employment for disabled veterans and veteran under-employment.

I hope you leave New Orleans with the mindset of recruiting other veterans under our banner. The solidarity we enjoyed in uniform is here with us in this room. It's a feeling that only we can understand, but we can share it with our fellow veterans.

I would like to take a moment to thank my fellow members of the Department of Alabama. Please stand and be recognized.

Serving in an organization like DAV is never easy. But, it was a very rewarding experience and I made many friends along the way. The memories of my year as your Commander will last a lifetime.

I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

I cannot begin to thank the many people among you who have been with me since the beginning of my journey. I was encouraged to lead, given lots of free advice and was supported when tough decisions had to be made. You know who you are...and I am very grateful.

I'm remiss though if I don't offer a special thanks to my good friend and DAV's national adjutant, Marc Burgess. Behind every decision our membership makes for the organization, there is a careful and well-crafted strategy put in place to execute the mission.

Marc, Barry, Garry and our directors form the strategic force that makes the DAV so successful. They honor our volunteers and the people in the field with their thoughtful leadership.

They are impressive people. After all, they kept up with me this year. **And I was rolling!** It's been a great honor for me to serve. There have been so many special people I've had a chance to meet. I've learned so much from all of you. I'm not going anywhere. I hope in the years to come, I'll get to know more of you and continue my service – just in a different capacity.

Before my time is through, in keeping with our tradition, I hope you will allow me to honor you with my final salute for all you do to ensure we maintain our mission of providing a lifetime of support for our veterans, their families and survivors.