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# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## DAV recognizes exceptional veterans advocates

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) announced the names of nine dedicated veterans advocates being honored for their outstanding efforts and achievements on behalf of the men and women who served.

Federal executives, senators, representatives, congressional staffers and other veteran advocates are eligible for these honors, which recognize commitment and excellence in service to veterans, their families and survivors.

“The recipients of this year’s advocacy awards have illustrated an unmatched commitment to fighting for the best interests of veterans and their families,” said DAV National Commander Stephen “Butch” Whitehead. “Veterans are a nonpartisan issue and these honorees worked tirelessly to ensure our nation keeps its promises to our nation’s heroes.”

Honorees will be presented their awards in the weeks ahead, and videos of award presentations will be available Feb. 21 at [www.dav.org/2021midwinter](http://www.dav.org/2021midwinter).

**Outstanding Federal Executive of the Year: Cheryl L. Mason**, chairman, Board of Veterans’ Appeals, Department of Veterans Affairs, for her tireless leadership in service to ill and injured veterans and improving the VA appeals system during the very complex challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the Board suspended all hearings in March 2020 due to the pandemic and public health crisis, Chairman Mason quickly established an alternative hearing pilot program allowing veterans to attend Board hearings virtually from their own homes along with their accredited representatives.

**Outstanding Senate Legislator of the Year: The Honorable Joe Manchin III (W.Va.)**, U.S. Senate, for his strong leadership and bipartisanship on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee as well as his unflinching commitment to the men and women who served. His willingness to tackle key veterans issues such as sexual assault, opioid addiction and health care access for rural veterans—and, in particular, his legislation to address toxic exposures from burn pits—is greatly appreciated. We also recognize his unyielding pursuit of justice for the families of veterans whose lives were cut short and for legislative actions resulting in the enactment of the Improving Safety and Security for Veterans Act.

**Outstanding House Legislator of the Year: The Honorable Mike Bost (Ill.)**, U.S. House of Representatives, for his leadership and bipartisanship on the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee and his efforts addressing military toxic exposures and improving health services for our nation’s women veterans. His unflinching commitment to tackling key veterans issues—which resulted in the passage of the Appeals Modernization Act and the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act—is greatly appreciated. He also championed reform to the Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance Program, ensured that veterans and survivors received adequate annual compensation increases, and advocated for changes to the VA’s debt collection process.

## DAV Special Recognition Awards:

- **Mr. Jason “JC” Henry**, professional staff member, Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, for his significant contributions as an advocate and policymaker devoted to improving the lives of our nation’s veterans, their families and survivors. In particular, his collaboration with the veterans service organization (VSO) community on several key issues, including his efforts to make Disability Benefits Questionnaires publicly available, reestablish the 48-hour VSO pre-decisional review period, as well as his work on burn pits and toxic exposures and the addition of Agent Orange-related presumptive diseases.
- **Ms. Andrea Goldstein**, senior policy advisor, Women Veterans Task Force, for her work to increase the understanding of the challenges and needs of our nation’s women veterans, including cultural barriers to care, post-deployment mental health concerns, employment and economic challenges, sexual harassment and military sexual trauma. This important work helped achieve final passage of meaningful legislation to address gaps in services for women veterans and improve the Department of Veterans Affairs programs that serve them.
- **Ms. Mary-Eileen Manning**, senior projects advisor for Sen. Dan Sullivan (AK), for her significant contributions as an advocate and policymaker devoted to improving the lives of our nation’s veterans and their families, in particular, her leadership addressing concerns of rural veterans and women veterans as well as her efforts on burn pits and toxic exposure legislation.
- **Ms. Liz Banicki**, legislative assistant for Sen. Dan Sullivan, for her significant contributions as an advocate and policymaker devoted to improving the lives of our nation’s veterans and their families, in particular, her leadership addressing concerns of rural veterans and women veterans as well as her efforts on burn pits and toxic exposure legislation.
- **Mr. Aaron Scheinberg**, legislative assistant for Sen. Joe Manchin, for his significant contributions as an advocate and policymaker devoted to improving the lives of our nation’s veterans and their families, in particular, his leadership in responding to the tragedy at the Clarksville VA Medical Center and his continued efforts on burn pits and toxic exposure legislation.
- **Ms. Nandini Narayan**, member services and outreach coordinator for Rep. Pete Aguilar (Calif.), for her significant contributions as an advocate and policymaker devoted to improving the lives of our nation’s veterans, their families and survivors, in particular, her leadership and dedicated collaboration with the VSO community on issues affecting veterans and their families and specifically for helping to advance legislation for survivors of disabled veterans.

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### About DAV

*DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them, fighting for the interests of America’s injured heroes on Capitol Hill, providing employment resources to veterans and their families, and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a nonprofit organization with more than 1 million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932. Learn more at [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org).*

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