



Remarks for National Guest Department Conventions 2023

Acknowledge introduction, distinguished guests, and DAV Auxiliary officers and members, as well as others in the audience.

It's great to see so many faces here for our 2023 Department of [STATE] Convention. Everyone in this room is vital to our mission. Thank you for coming out and taking an active role in the veteran community.

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It's a privilege and honor to be here today as your national guest, and I thank you for the opportunity. I am incredibly proud to represent National Commander Joe Parsetich and National Adjutant Marc Burgess, who extend their heartfelt gratitude to all of you.

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As an organization, we take a bold stand: We will keep our promise to America's veterans.

That commitment reinforces our mission statement. We are dedicated to a single purpose: **empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity.**

We promise empowerment. We promise to be a voice on Capitol Hill. We promise to educate the public about veterans' needs and sacrifices.

It's not a false promise. Nor does it come with a **caveat**. We don't say we are only going to do these things when it's *convenient*. Or when it's *comfortable*. Or when it's *popular*.

“Keeping Our Promise to America’s Veterans” speaks to our history as much as it lays the groundwork for what has yet to come.

Ours is a promise that’s enduring. It’s backed by action and achievement.

Our promise is a proclamation that we can look to when global events out of our control have made the easy things hard and the hard things seem nearly impossible.

For us, the promise is a **guiding star** to follow, pointing us in the direction we should go: toward innovative solutions, new opportunities, and continued service to veterans and their families.

Who are we if we forsake our promise? What does that say about us if we let adversity overcome us and derail our efforts? Our mission is too important. Failure is not an option.

<PAUSE>

These last few years we have faced constant uncertainty with the pandemic and economic crisis that have upended the lives of far too many veterans and their families. But these will not be the last challenges we face.

We have and will continue to overcome these difficulties through collaboration, innovation and enduring commitment to mission. I'm here to tell you adversity has not deterred us from our mission and has only strengthened our resolve.

Allow me to share some of our highlights from 2022:

Last year, we acquired an independent charity and made it a DAV program. DAV Patriot Boot Camp helps founders in the veteran- and military-connected community with training and resources to empower them to become entrepreneurs.

By the end of this year, DAV Patriot Boot Camp will have hosted five intensive in-person training events and provided monthly training and resources to empower veteran entrepreneurs, including spouses, to succeed. This program complements DAV's ongoing efforts to support and advocate on behalf of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses.

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Students who have volunteered with DAV have accomplished wonderful things and been awarded with our DAV scholarships for their efforts.

We've increased the amount of our scholarships. Today, we offer 10 awards totaling 110-thousand-dollars annually, with the top scholarship being 30-thousand dollars. Students with at least 100 lifetime volunteer hours with DAV can apply. We want to give this money to outstanding students who support veterans in their communities to incentivize others to follow their lead! Please encourage them to go to DAV-scholarships-dot-org to find out more, and please help spread the word!

<PAUSE>

And to ALL our volunteers, on behalf of Commander Parsetich and Adjutant Burgess, I want to take a minute to give you my deepest gratitude for what you do.

Whether you have driven veterans to appointments, spent time in VA hospitals, connected them with benefits or helped in some other way in your local community, you have made a difference. YOU are the face—and heart—of DAV and a beacon of hope for those that need it the most. Your devotion and dedication to the veteran community is truly inspiring.

In 2022, volunteer drivers drove more than **9.2-million miles**, taking nearly **210-thousand** veterans to their appointments.

In total, DAV volunteers worked over 1 million hours in VA hospitals and throughout our communities.

As incredible as these numbers are, there's more work to be done. We will continue to honor the promise we have made to veterans. So, whether you have an hour or can volunteer full time, consider donating your most precious resource—your time. Make sure you check out [Volunteer-for-Veterans-dot-org](https://www.volunteer-for-veterans.org) for more details on how you, too, can get involved.

<PAUSE>

Volunteering isn't the only way DAV has helped veterans. In 2022, thousands of veterans unfortunately experienced natural disasters, but we answered their call for help.

Through our Disaster Relief Program, DAV distributed nearly **2.1-million-dollars** to over **3,000** veterans affected by natural disasters, including hurricanes, tornados, floods and fires throughout 15 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

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And finally, we have worked hard to support those who help our organization grow. Our membership system at My-D-A-V-dot-org and the Recruit A Warrior program are working well. These modernizing efforts have enhanced our capabilities and streamlined the recruitment process for new members. The Recruit A Warrior program also ensures you get recruitment credit *and* DAV points to use in our store.

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As I said a few minutes ago, as an organization we are as strong as we have ever been. And the credit goes to you—our members—and the commitment you have made to helping veterans and their families.

As part of the Department of [STATE], you've been busy.

[Specific points related to the department the speaker wishes to address go here.]

Your hard work and dedication to veterans in [STATE] is evident, and I thank you for your tremendous efforts.

<PAUSE>

Lastly, there are a couple of other groups I want to highlight and thank.

The first group is our benefits advocates. DAV has 246 professionally trained national service officers and 27 transition service officers. That's alongside 2,639 chapter and department service officers who are on the front lines serving veterans and their families every day.

These benefits advocates are experts who provide direct assistance to our injured and ill veterans and their families.

In 2022, DAV's service program took over **2.4 million actions** to advocate for veterans and their families. And with DAV's assistance, service members, veterans and their families received more than **26.4-billion-dollars** in earned benefits.

To those we serve, our service officers are DAV and, in many cases, are the ones who help change their lives for the better.

I'd like all our national service officers, transition service officers, and department and chapter service officers to please stand to be recognized for your tremendous work.

<LEAD APPLAUSE >

You are the cornerstone of our mission of service. Many times, someone's first contact with DAV is when they meet one of you, and as many of you can personally attest, they come to us not knowing where else to turn. Thank you sincerely for what you do.

<PAUSE>

I also want to thank our counterparts in the Auxiliary, who serve alongside us and are a critical part of our mission. We have no better allies who understand service and sacrifice as intimately as you do.

For your unmatched dedication to service of the veteran community, National Commander Darlene Spence, National Adjutant Bunny Clos, and the rest of our friends and allies in the Auxiliary, thank you. All of you are truly a blessing to DAV.

<PAUSE>

There may be no higher calling than to serve our veteran brothers and sisters and their families. I feel honored and privileged to stand with you as a part of the DAV family. And I am honored to be able to work alongside you as we continue to keep our promise to America's veterans.

Again, thank you for all you do to serve the veteran community here in [STATE] and for your hospitality.

Now let's continue our important work and make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

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Benefits Advocacy

- In 2022, DAV submitted more than 174,000 new benefits claims on behalf of veterans and their families.
- With DAV's assistance, service members, veterans and their families received over \$26.4 billion in earned benefits.
- DAV currently holds 1.1 million powers of attorney (POA) authorizations from claimants who have selected DAV as their authorized representative.
- Since being congressionally chartered in 1932, DAV has submitted more than 12 million benefits claims.
- DAV currently provides representation for nearly 179,000 pending claims.
- In 2022, DAV took over 2.4 million actions to advocate for veterans and their families, including representing their claims in benefits hearings and appeals, reviewing records and offering professional advice.

Service Officers

- DAV has 255 trained national service officers and 30 transition service officers at over 100 national service and transition service offices nationwide.
- DAV national service officers provide direct assistance to ill and injured veterans and their families free of charge.
- Over 3,700 service officers bolster the service corps to ensure fellow veterans receive the highest quality of representation possible.
- DAV service officers interviewed over 285,000 claimants in 2022.

Disaster Relief

- DAV provided more than \$2 million to more than 3,000 veterans impacted by natural disasters and fires in 22 states.
- DAV provides kits that include backpacks, blankets and hygiene products to disaster-stricken veterans.
- Since its inception in 1968, the DAV Disaster Relief Program has provided over \$19.5 million in relief funds.

Veterans Benefits

- DAV is committed to correcting inequities and providing parity in compensation benefits for veterans and survivors.
- DAV is currently advocating for legislation—including the Major Richard Star Act—that fights for concurrent receipt of earned military payments and VA disability compensation without offsets.
- The PACT Act passed last year, now the Department of Veterans Affairs must faithfully implement and address gaps in toxic-exposure benefits. Since its inception, DAV has been instrumental in advocating for veterans suffering from toxic exposures, and it brought the subject of burn pits to the public's attention in 2008.

Caregivers

- The VA began Phase II expansion of VA's caregiver program as of Oct. 1, 2022. The expansion includes eligible veterans who served between May 7, 1975, and Sept. 11, 2001.
- In 2022, following the VA's arbitrary dismissal of many veterans from its caregiver program, the department announced the suspension of annual reassessments, pending a review of its eligibility requirements.
- Currently, VA will not discharge or reduce stipends for any veterans or family caregivers participating in the program.
- DAV is closely monitoring the program and supported the VA's announcement in March 2022 that it would not remove anyone from the caregiver program or decrease any support before reexamining the current eligibility criteria.

Asset and Infrastructure Review

- Congress scrapped the VA's Asset and Infrastructure Review in 2022. The Congressionally authorized BRAC-like (base realignment and closure) commission was mandated by the DAV-supported 2018 MISSION Act.
- DAV continues to call on the VA and Congress to continue efforts on addressing VA's aging infrastructure and develop a new strategy to build, repair and modernize VA facilities.
- It's important to remember that—even if changes have been recommended for local facilities—there will be no immediate changes.
- DAV is fighting to ensure that modernization efforts result in enhanced access to care and that no veteran loses access to VA services in the process.
- DAV needs your valuable membership to stay engaged and informed on this critical issue.

Women and Minority Veterans

- Women are the fastest-growing demographic of the veteran community, projected to reach 18% of the nationwide veteran population by 2040.
- Additionally, though the total veteran population is projected to decrease from 19.5 million in 2020 to 13.6 million in 2040, the percentage of minority veterans is expected to rise from 25% to 35% over that same period.
- The VA's own systematic review found it has not been completely successful in eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in veterans' benefits and health outcomes, and VA research also shows lower health care provider trust among minority veterans.
- DAV supports and is actively working toward the elimination of health disparities among woman, LGBTQ+ and minority veterans.

Employment and Entrepreneurism

- DAV and RecruitMilitary continue serving veterans seeking jobs and are pleased to offer a full lineup of more than 93 virtual and in-person events this year.
- An average of 112 veterans and military spouses connect with patriotic employers.

- Recognizing employers in your community is a way to encourage hiring. You can nominate or encourage a company to apply for consideration through DAV's Patriot Employer Program. Employers who can demonstrate a commitment to hiring, retaining and supporting veterans in their community can be recognized with a digital badge and considered for DAV Employer of the Year recognition. Visit patriotemployer.org for more information and encourage others to participate.
- Every year, hundreds of entrepreneurs from the veteran- and military-connected community, including spouses, receive intensive training, networking and resources through DAV Patriot Boot Camp.
- Through in-person events and digital engagements, DAV Patriot Boot Camp helps founders launch, scale and sustain businesses.
- Visit patriotbootcamp.org and sign up for the program's newsletter to be added to future communications on programs and opportunities. Interested volunteer mentors can connect with DAV at info@patriotbootcamp.org.

Membership

- DAV membership has many advantages, but one of the newest perks is already helping save members money on a multitude of travel, dining and service experiences.
- Among the rotating lineup of Member Advantages, deals have included discounts with Disneyland Resort, SeaWorld Parks, Universal Studios Hollywood, Shipt, Ace Hardware, Shell, Subway, Domino's, Apple and Sonic.
- DAV members have already collectively saved hundreds of thousands of dollars through Member Advantages, and it's another recruiting tool to use. Deals on well-known national and local brands are available at dav.enjoymydeals.com.

Volunteerism

- DAV Scholarships have increased the total annual award money offered to \$110,000, and we encourage every member to spread the word to young adults in their local communities.
- The scholarship deadline is in February each year, but the summer months are great for students to begin logging volunteer hours for next year's application cycle.
- We also want to hear directly from you about your high-performing volunteers. If you have a great volunteer story in your community you'd like to share, we want to hear about it! Send us a note to vavs@dav.org.
- To learn more about volunteer opportunities, check out volunteerforveterans.org.