



## Remarks for National Guest Department Conventions 2024

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

It's great to look around and see such a special group of leaders here at the 2024 Department of [STATE] Convention. Everyone in this room is essential to our mission, and I'm thankful that you've taken an active role in the veteran community.

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It's a privilege and honor to represent National Commander Nancy Espinosa and National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski, who extend their heartfelt gratitude to all of you.

At DAV, we believe that “thank you for your service” is more than words; **it’s action.**

Our mission statement, “Keeping Our Promise to America's Veterans,” represents action, honors our history and prepares us for the future.

People across this great nation see our actions and commitment every day. They see it in myriad ways as we help veterans and their families achieve personal victories, both great and small.

Because of that, veterans and our supporters trust us and know that we fight for the issues that matter to them, and we get results. Now more than ever, people look to us to lead and advocate.

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I know firsthand how challenging our work can be and how it can test us daily. But when I look at all of you, I see our collective strength and know what we can accomplish together.

Through collaboration, innovation and our enduring commitment to America's veterans, we have—and will—continue to overcome difficulties that pop up. I'm here to tell you that adversity has not deterred us from our mission and has only strengthened our resolve.

**Allow me to share some of our highlights from 2023:**

Last fall, DAV launched its newest program—DAV Caregivers Support. This no-cost initiative provides concierge assistance and resources to the friends, family members and other loved ones who care for veterans.

Caregiving is a noble yet often thankless task. This program helps improve the quality of life for veterans and their caregivers while extending the time veterans can live in their own homes.

DAV Caregivers Support is powered by TCARE, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business founded by a DAV Patriot Boot Camp alumnus.

You never know when something as simple as a referral can change a life, and the program has already provided direct, life-changing support for hundreds of veteran caregivers.

The simple act of telling someone how they can get help can be absolutely transformative. So make sure you let folks know that DAV Caregivers Support is there for them.

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Students who have volunteered with DAV have accomplished wonderful things, and for their efforts, we have awarded them with tens of thousands of dollars through our DAV Scholarships.

We've increased the amount of our scholarships and now 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 students to go to [DAVscholarships.org](http://DAVscholarships.org) to find out more, and please help spread the word!

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

Whether you have driven veterans to medical appointments, spent time in VA hospitals, connected veterans with benefits or helped in some other way, **you** have made a difference. Your devotion and dedication to the veteran community is impactful and inspiring.

In 2023, volunteer drivers drove more than **9.2 million miles**, taking nearly **246 thousand** veterans to their appointments.

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In total, DAV volunteers worked more than **2.9 million hours** in VA hospitals and throughout our communities.

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

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Volunteering isn't the only way DAV has helped veterans. In 2023, thousands of veterans unfortunately experienced natural disasters, but we answered their call for help.

Through our Disaster Relief Program, DAV distributed nearly **726 thousand dollars** to over **1,000** veterans affected by natural disasters, including hurricanes, tornados, floods and fires in 21 states.

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And finally, we have worked hard to support those who help our organization grow. New members are the animating force behind DAV, fostering growth and bringing in new ideas.

I highly encourage you to become more aware of the member resources available to you at [MyDAV.org](http://MyDAV.org). These resources will help empower you to spread awareness of DAV's programs, services and advocacy efforts. Be sure to refer to them often, as we are always adding to them.

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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.

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

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The first group is our benefits advocates. DAV has **253 professionally trained national service officers and 26 transition service officers**. That's alongside **3,610 chapter and department service officers** who are on the front lines serving veterans and their families.

These expert benefits advocates provide direct assistance to our ill and injured veterans and their families every day.

In 2023, DAV's service program took over **2.8 million actions** to advocate for veterans and their families. And with DAV's assistance, service members, veterans and their families received more than **28.4 billion dollars** in earned benefits.

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To those we serve, our benefits advocates 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.

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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, Auxiliary National Commander AnnMarie Hurley, 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.

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.

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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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