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TO: National Executive Committee
Department and Chapter Commanders and Adjutants
National Headquarters and Washington Directors
National Service Officers

FROM: Barry Jesinoski, National Adjutant

DATE: Nov. 7, 2025

SUBJECT: National Commander Awards

We are pleased to announce the DAV National Commander's Awards! These awards honor those whose actions are exceptional examples of DAV's core values of Service, Quality, Integrity and Leadership. Nominations for the following awards are now being accepted through Feb. 27, 2026:

- Disabled American Veteran of the Year
- Department of Veterans Affairs Employees of the Year (VBA, VHA and NCA)
- Patriot Employer of the Year (large, midsize and small)
- Local Veterans' Employment Representative
- Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist
- DAV Volunteer of the Year
- Auxiliary Volunteer of the Year

Attached are the documents for each of the awards providing the necessary details for submitting nominations.

We thank those departments that have consistently participated and supported the National Commander's award program by submitting quality nominations. We urge your continued support, and for those who have not been involved, we ask you to assist us this year. We believe there are deserving candidates for each award in every state. While the National Commander can only select one recipient per award, DAV locally recognizing those who go above and beyond is also crucially important.

As always, thank you for your leadership and steadfast commitment to the men and women who have served and sacrificed for our tremendous freedoms.

Barry A. Jesinoski
National Adjutant

BAJ:dsb

The following governing rules are to be observed in the selection of the nominee for the National Commander's Award for Disabled American Veteran of the Year.

Nominations:

- Nominations for the Disabled American Veteran of the Year are generally submitted by a DAV state department; however, they may also originate from a chapter, business, the Department of Veterans Affairs, an individual or other entity. Previous years' candidates may be re-nominated if they have not formerly won the national award.
- Nominees must be service-connected disabled veterans. If a nominee is a DAV member, the chapter affiliation must be supplied. If not a current member, the nominee must be eligible for membership and willing to join.
- Nominees must have overcome their disabilities to such an extent that they have become productive members of society and serve as an inspiration to other disabled veterans with the community. Nominations should include information about personal rehabilitation and involvement with DAV and other community groups.
- The major disability of the nominee must be service connected. The term service-connected disability shall mean one which was incurred during time of war as defined by our Constitution and Bylaws and has been rated service connected by the VA. In lieu of this, eligibility will be established if the veteran can submit proof of disability retirement from the military.
- Nominations must be submitted with the full consent of the nominee, authorizing DAV's use of their name, picture and story for publicity purposes. The nomination form must include the nominee's signed written consent.

Selection Criteria:

- The nature and severity of the disability
- Persistence and initiative in surmounting the disability
- Achievements in overcoming the disability from an economic and employment standpoint
- Contributions and achievements in areas such as assistance to veterans, participation in civic activities and other actions which clearly demonstrate responsible citizenship

Administration:

The department adjutant is responsible on the state level for the administration of this program, and the national communications director is responsible on the national level. Submit nominations directly to natlconvawards@dav.org.

Publicity:

Departments and chapters are encouraged to establish and publicize through local media their own state and local disabled american veteran of the year award program. Establishing a "kickoff date" for these awards is recommended.

Expenses:

The winner will be presented the award at the DAV national convention. Round-trip airfare (nonrefundable economy class) and General Service Administration (GSA) per diem will be provided for lodging, meals and incidental expenses for up to six days for the winner and a companion.

Deadline:

All nominations must be received **no later than Feb. 27, 2026**.



National Commander's Awards

Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration and National Cemetery Administration

GOVERNING RULES

The following governing rules are to be observed in the selection of the nominee for the National Commander's Award for an outstanding member of the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Nominations:

- Nominations for an outstanding member of the VHA, VBA and NCA must generally be made by a state-level department of DAV from submissions made through the chapters. DAV national service offices may also submit nominations. Departments are also encouraged to consider nominations from individuals directly associated with or who have witnessed the outstanding performance of a member of the VHA, VBA or NCA. Previous years' candidates may be re-nominated if they have not formerly won the national award.
- A resume of education and work activities, to include military service dates and branch, if applicable, must be included for each nominee.
- Nominees need not be members of DAV or a veteran to be eligible for these awards. However, if they are members of DAV or the Auxiliary, their affiliation should be noted in their nomination.
- Section D of the nomination form (military service information) should be completed, if applicable.
- Nomination forms must include the nominee's signed written consent authorizing DAV's use of their name, photo and story for publicity purposes.

Selection Criteria:

- Exemplary accomplishments in relation to how the nominee's employment positively impacts DAV's mission of keeping our promise to America's veterans
- The ability of the nominee to willingly and effectively motivate others to positively serve the needs of injured and ill veterans and their families
- Public relations, writing, speaking and other proactive activities on behalf of veterans and their families

Administration:

The department adjutant is responsible on the state-level for administration of this program. DAV national service offices will submit nominations directly to **natlconvawards@dav.org**.

Publicity:

Every department is strongly encouraged to participate and urged to publicize this awards program for maximum participation. This is an effective way to recognize outstanding service by members of the VHA, VBA and NCA and to encourage others to emulate their outstanding work on behalf of injured and ill veterans and their families.

Award winners will be notified and award will be shipped to them.

Deadline:

Each nomination, with all supporting material, must be received **no later than Feb. 27, 2026**.

The following governing rules are to be observed in the selection of the nominee for the National Commander's Award for the Outstanding Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP).

Nominations:

- Chapters should submit nominations for the LVER Award to the state-level Department Employment Committee or to a specific committee appointed by the department commander. Previous candidates may be re-nominated if they have not formerly won the national award. In addition to chapter nominations, departments are urged to solicit and accept nominations from employers, local employment office managers, state and assistant state directors of veterans employment and others. These are the people who know the quality of work performed by LVERs and DVOPs.
- Nominations must be submitted with the full consent of the nominee authorizing DAV's use of their name, picture and story for publicity purposes.
- Nominations will be reviewed by the national employment director and national interim employment committee who will recommend recipients to the national commander for final selection.

Selection criteria:

- Accomplishments with regard to outreach, counseling, training, placement and job development opportunities for America's injured heroes
- Ability to motivate and stimulate other employment service personnel to serve veterans
- Effectiveness with employers, veterans organizations, unions, government officials and injured and ill veteran applicants
- Outreach activities on behalf of veterans and their families

Administration:

The department adjutant is responsible on the state level for the administration of this program, and the national employment director is responsible on the national level. Submit nominations directly to natlconvawards@dav.org.

Publicity:

Every department is requested to urge participation in this program by all chapters, as this is an effective way to maximize employment services for disabled veterans at the local level. Chapter officers should contact local office managers of the state employment service and work with state and local veterans employment representatives to ensure the success of this program. All chapters are urged to publicize this awards program. It would be most appropriate to invite local veterans' employment representatives and/or local office managers to speak at chapter meetings about local employment services for veterans.

Departments are asked to consider inviting state administrators, regional and state directors of veterans employment, and other employment service personnel to publicize these activities.

The anticipated cooperation of all departments is appreciated, as it will result in expansion of employment and training opportunities for countless unemployed or underemployed veterans.

Award winners will be notified and award will be shipped to them.

Deadline:

Each nomination, with all supporting material, must be received **no later than Feb. 27, 2026**.

The following governing rules are to be observed in selecting the nominee for the DAV Patriot Employer Recognition Program. DAV wants to publicly recognize businesses that demonstrate by their employment policies, hiring practices and community outreach, an unwavering commitment and passion to ensure veterans obtain suitable employment to care for themselves and their families—and have the opportunity to live life with respect and dignity. Employers will be recognized as a DAV Patriot Employer and will receive an email with a digital badge to display on their website, along with a certificate. Additionally, all nominations will also be considered for the DAV annual recognition for small, midsize and large employers. The annual recognition is for DAV Patriot Employer of the Year (one small, one midsize, one large employer) and other special recognition for employers with excellence in Veteran Hiring, Career Building, and Community Involvement efforts. These employers will receive a letter via email, a digital badge to display on their website and a plaque.

- Small Employer: 249 or fewer employees
- Midsize Employer: 250 to 999 employees
- Large Employer: 1,000 or more employees

Nominations:

- Nominations for the DAV Patriot Employer Recognition may be submitted by a DAV state department; however, they may also originate from a chapter or directly from an employer. Previous years' candidates may be re-nominated if they have not formerly won the national award.
- Nominations may be accompanied by newspaper clippings, magazine articles, website information, letters of recommendation, press releases and other supporting documentation.
- Military service information on the nomination should be completed if applicable (e.g., the company CEO/president or the person accepting the potential award on the company's behalf is a veteran). Military service of company leadership is not required for recognition.
- More than one nomination for each award may be submitted by a department or other submitting entity.
- Nomination forms must include the nominee's signed written consent authorizing DAV's use of their name, photo and story for publicity purposes.
- Nominations will be reviewed by the national employment director and national interim employment committee before recommendations are made to the national commander for final selection of the DAV Patriot Employer of the Year and other special recognition.
- The nomination form is available online at **patriotemployers.org**. We recommend submitting nominations online, but if you do not have access to submit a nomination online, you may email a nomination to **natlconvawards@dav.org**.

Selection Criteria:

- Strength of veteran recruiting/hiring efforts
- Veteran retention and career-building efforts
- Company policies specific to disabled veteran, active-duty and veteran employees, National Guard members, reservists and their families
- Outreach supporting veterans in communities where the business operates

Administration:

The department adjutant is responsible on the state level for the administration of this program, and the national employment director is responsible on the national level.

Publicity:

Departments and chapters are encouraged to establish and publicize their own outstanding employers of the year awards through local media. Establishing a "kickoff date" for these awards is recommended.

The employers receiving recognition as DAV Patriot Employer of the Year (one small, one midsize, one large) will receive an invite to attend the DAV national convention and be presented the award by the national commander at the recipient company's expense.

Deadline:

All nominations must be received **no later than Feb. 27, 2026** to be considered for the DAV Patriot Employer of the Year and other special recognition.



2026 National Commander's Award Nomination Form

Department of _____ State _____

Type of Nomination (Select One):

- ☐ Veterans Health Administration (VHA) – Complete Sections A, C, D, F, I
- ☐ Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) – Complete Sections A, C, D, F, I
- ☐ National Cemetery Administration (NCA) – Complete Sections A, C, D, F, I
- ☐ Disabled American Veteran of the Year – Complete Sections A, C, D, F, H, I
- ☐ Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist – Complete Sections A, C, D, E, F, I
- ☐ Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) – Complete Sections A, C, D, E, F, I
- ☐ Patriot Employer of the Year – Small (up to 249) – Complete Sections B, C, D, E, G, I
- ☐ Patriot Employer of the Year – Midsize (250–999) – Complete Sections B, C, D, E, G, I
- ☐ Patriot Employer of the Year – Large (1,000+) – Complete Sections B, C, D, E, G, I

Section A

Nominee's Name _____

Work Address _____

Home Address _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____ Place of Birth _____ Marital Status _____

Spouse's Name _____ Children _____

Section B

Company Name _____ Industry _____

CEO/Owner _____
Name _____ Title _____

Headquarters Address _____

Company Website _____

Section C

Phone _____
Work _____ Home _____ Cell _____

Email _____
Work _____ Home _____

Section D

Military Service (If applicable)

Date ☐ Enlisted ☐ Drafted ☐ Commissioned ____/____/____ Date Separated ____/____/____

Branch _____ Rank _____

DAV Membership (Select one if applicable)

☐ Member Chapter _____
Number _____ State _____

☐ Eligible for Membership ☐ Not Eligible for Membership

Section E

Local Office Manager

Name _____ Title _____

Company Name _____

Address _____

2026 National Commander's Award Nomination Form, cont'd

Award: ☐ VHA ☐ VBA ☐ NCA ☐ Disabled American Veteran of the Year ☐ DVOP Specialist ☐ LVER
☐ Patriot Employer – Small ☐ Patriot Employer – Midsize ☐ Patriot Employer – Large

Nominee/Company Name _____

Section F

Nominee's Achievements *(attach additional sheet if needed)*

Nominee's Involvement with DAV and Community Groups *(attach additional sheet if needed)*

Section G

Please limit your responses to 350 words. Attach additional sheets as needed.

Company's Veteran Recruiting and Hiring Efforts

Career Building, Retention and Development Efforts

Community Involvement

Additional Information *(optional)*

Section H

Attach additional sheets as needed.

Service-Connected Disabilities *(include description of how disabilities were incurred)*

Non-Service-Connected Disabilities *(include description of how disabilities were incurred)*

How Nominee Overcame Disabilities

2026 National Commander's Award Nomination Form, cont'd

Award: ☐ VHA ☐ VBA ☐ NCA ☐ Disabled American Veteran of the Year ☐ DVOP Specialist ☐ LVER
☐ Patriot Employer – Small ☐ Patriot Employer – Midsize ☐ Patriot Employer – Large

Nominee/Company Name _____

Section I

Submitted by

Name

Title

Company Name (Patriot Employer of the Year only)

Address

Phone

Approved by (requires at least one signature if submitted by a DAV representative)

DAV NSO

Department Adjutant

Department Commander

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION

In addition to this application, please include the following items with your nomination:

- ☐ Nominee's resume *not necessary for Employer of the Year nominations*
- ☐ Narrative explaining why the nominee was selected
- ☐ Recent photo of nominee, suitable for publicity purposes. For Employer of the Year nominations, a photo of the CEO/owner. Acceptable formats include:
 - (1) Glossy print, at least 4" x 6"
 - (2) CD/USB drive containing a JPEG image measuring at least 4" x 6" and 300 ppi or higher
- ☐ Company logo in full-color, vector format (PDF, EPS) *Employer of the Year only*
- ☐ Nominee's signed consent (below)

Consent Form

I, _____, hereby authorize DAV to use my name, photo and biographical information in connection with the National Commander's Awards.

Signature

Date

Please submit your nomination by Feb. 27, 2026. Email your submission to natlconvawards@dav.org, or mail it to the address below.

DAV National Headquarters
ATTN: National Convention Awards
860 Dolwick Drive
Erlanger, KY 41018



National Headquarters
860 Dolwick Drive
Erlanger, KY 41018
tel 859-441-7300
toll free 877-426-2838
dav.org

Washington Headquarters
1300 I Street NW, Suite 400W
Washington, DC 20005
tel 202-554-3501

DAV and DAV Auxiliary Volunteer of the Year Awards


The DAV Volunteer of the Year Awards are awarded annually by DAV in recognition of extraordinary volunteer dedication to the needs of ill and injured veterans through the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) or Local Veterans Assistance (LVAP) programs.

Only DAV and DAV Auxiliary members who have contributed hours through the programs above are eligible for this prestigious award. An award will be presented to an outstanding volunteer from both the DAV and DAV Auxiliary at the DAV National Convention. Round-trip airfare (nonrefundable economy class), hotel accommodations, and General Service Administration (GSA) meals per diem for three days for each of the winners and a companion. In addition, all individual nominees receive a certificate recognizing their contributions.

We encourage your whole-hearted participation in the nominations for the Volunteer of the Year Award. Department commanders and voluntary service program managers should submit nominations to this office no later than Feb. 27, 2026.

Please return completed forms for one DAV and one DAV Auxiliary volunteer to DAV National Headquarters. Department commanders with more than one VA facility in their state may submit one DAV and one DAVA volunteer from each facility. Please feel free to copy the nomination forms as needed or if you have any additional questions contact Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst at vavs@dav.org or (859) 442-2056.

Thank you for your efforts in making 2025 a year to remember. What better way is there to honor volunteers who do so much for America's ill and injured veterans! We look forward to hearing from you no later than Feb. 27, 2026.



Barry A. Jesinoski
National Adjutant

JMB:dsb



2026 Hospital and Voluntary Services Award Nomination Form Volunteer of the Year

This nomination is for: ☐ DAV ☐ DAV Auxiliary

Nominee's Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

VAMC Name _____

VAMC _____
Station Code City State

VAVS Program Manager _____ Phone _____

NOTE: THE NOMINEE MUST BE A DAV OR DAV AUXILIARY MEMBER. Chapter # _____ Unit # _____

Please answer the following questions. (Attach additional sheets as needed.)

1. Total years as a volunteer: _____

2. Lifetime volunteer hours: _____

3. How does the volunteer directly improve the lives of veterans:

4. How does the volunteer's assignment directly affect patient morale?

5. In what ways does the volunteer positively affect other volunteers?

6. Please explain why the volunteer's assignment is valuable to you.

7. The volunteer's dependability is: ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

8. The volunteer's assignment is: ☐ Between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. ☐ After 5 p.m. ☐ Weekends ☐ On call

9. Average hours volunteered per week: _____

2026 Hospital and Voluntary Services Award Nomination Form

Volunteer of the Year for: ☐ DAV ☐ DAV Auxiliary

Nominee's Name _____

10. Please describe any special aspects of the volunteer you are nominating.

Approved by *(requires at least one signature)*

DAV Department Commander VAVS Program Manager Date

When submitting your nomination, please include the following items:

- ☐ Recent photo of nominee, suitable for publicity purposes. Acceptable formats include:
 - (1) glossy print, at least 4" x 6"
 - (2) CD/USB drive containing a JPEG image measuring at least 4" x 6" and 300 ppi or higher
- ☐ Nominee's signed consent (below)
- ☐ **Optional:** Photos of the nominee volunteering

Consent Form

I, _____, hereby authorize DAV to use my name, photo and biographical information in connection with the National Commander's Awards Program.

Signature Date

Please submit your nomination by February 27, 2026 to the Voluntary Services Department via email at **volunteerawards@dav.org** or via postal mail at the address below.

DAV National Headquarters
National Convention Awards
860 Dolwick Drive
Erlanger, KY 41018



National Headquarters
860 Dolwick Drive
Erlanger, KY 41018
tel 859-441-7300
toll free 877-426-2838
dav.org

DAV Scholarships Program

DAV is seeking nominations for youth volunteers who may be eligible for DAV Scholarships in 2026. This program is designed to encourage youth volunteers to become active in the DAV's Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP) and/or the Department of Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service Program (VAVS). It is vital that we continue to engage and involve youth in the benefits of volunteering, so we ask for your support of this scholarship program.

An electronic application and awards information can be found at www.davscholarships.org.

DAV scholarships are awarded to youth volunteers who are committed to serving our nation's veterans. Fifteen scholarships are awarded totaling \$140,000 to help fund the recipients higher education.

Scholarships are awarded annually in the following amounts:

- One scholarship of \$30,000
- One scholarship of \$20,000
- One scholarship of \$15,000
- Two scholarship of \$10,000
- Four scholarships of \$7,500
- Four scholarships of \$5,000
- Two scholarships of \$2,500

The 2025 top honor was awarded to Nihar Kummetha who is a 2025 graduate of the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, in Durham, North Carolina. He entered his freshman year at the University of Pennsylvania to study biochemistry. His more than 375 hours of volunteering included educating veterans on technology usage; providing hygiene kits and comfort items to veterans experiencing homelessness; and creating a veterans wellness project at his local VA medical facility. There are many ways scholarships can be earned and we hope for maximum participation so we can connect as many future leaders as possible to our nation's heroes, their families and survivors.

Eligibility:

- Scholarships can be awarded to any volunteer who is 21 or younger and has volunteered a minimum of 100 lifetime hours through the VAVS Program or DAV's LVAP.
- Applicants under the VAVS Program must credit their hours to the DAV or DAV Auxiliary.
- The scholarships can be used for any accredited institution of higher learning, including universities, colleges, community colleges or vocational schools.
- Scholarships must be utilized in full prior to the recipient attaining age 25 or within six years of receiving the scholarship, whichever is later.

Applications:

- Applications for this award may be submitted by the following:
 - A voluntary services representative at a VA Medical Center
 - DAV chapters, DAV Auxiliary Units and all DAV and DAV Auxiliary representatives and deputy representatives
 - The youth volunteer may also complete an application
- Applications must be submitted with the full consent of the youth volunteer or their guardian, authorizing DAV's use of their name, picture and story for publicity purposes. The consent form can be found on the application.
- Applications will be reviewed by DAV's national voluntary services director, as well as the National Interim Hospital and Voluntary Services Committee. Recommendations will be made to the national commander for final selection.
- All submissions should include the application form, essay and supporting documentation that you would like to have considered by the selection committee.
- Applications should be submitted online at www.davscholarships.org. If you do not have access to enter the submission online, you can complete the attached application form.

Applicants are encouraged to solicit recommendations and information from the VA Medical Center Director, program managers, and other staff members who are directly involved with the VAVS Program in your facilities. With regard to LVAP, please solicit recommendations and information from the appropriate DAV state-level department, chapter or Auxiliary unit officials.

Deadline:

Applications for the 2026 DAV Scholarships are being accepted now through Feb. 28, 2026. Any application received after the deadline will be held for the next award year.

National Convention Participation:

The top recipient will be presented with the award at the DAV national convention. Round-trip airfare (lowest coach, nonrefundable fare), hotel accommodations for two nights and meals per diem for up to three days will be provided for the recipient and a parent or guardian.

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact our voluntary services staff at volunteerawards@dav.org or 888-480-6786.



John H. Kleindienst
National Voluntary Services Director



2026 Hospital and Voluntary Services Award Nomination Form DAV Scholarships

Volunteer's Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Application submitted by ☐ Self ☐ Other

If other, Name _____ Title _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please answer the following questions:

1. If known, how many months/years has the nominee volunteered? ☐ Months _____ ☐ Years _____

2. During the past year, where has the nominee volunteered? ☐ VA Medical Center ☐ Local Veterans Assistance Program

☐ Other _____

3. Is the student a member of any school clubs, National Honor Society, sports, JROTC, etc? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please elaborate and list any awards the student has received.

4. How does the volunteer's presence impact the patients, volunteer program or activity? How does he/she directly affect patient morale and/or other volunteers?

5. Has the volunteer been responsible for introducing additional volunteers into the DAV VAVS or LVAP program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please elaborate.

6. Please describe any special aspects of the student volunteer.

2026 Hospital and Voluntary Services Award Nomination Form, continued
DAV Scholarships

Name _____

7. How does the student volunteer plan to use the scholarship? What does the student volunteer intend to do to serve veterans in the future?

8. How did you hear about this scholarship?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION

In addition to this application, please include the following items with your nomination:

- Scholarship Nominations Only: Nominee's 750-1,000 word essay on "What volunteering has meant to me."
Optional: Recent photo of nominee, suitable for publicity purposes. Acceptable formats include:
(1) Glossy print, at least 4" x 6"
(2) CD/USB drive containing a JPEG image measuring at least 4" x 6" and 300 ppi or higher
Optional: Photos of the nominee volunteering

Please submit your nomination by Feb. 28, 2026. Email your submission to volunteerawards@dav.org, or mail it to:

DAV National Headquarters
ATTN: Voluntary Services
860 Dolwick Drive
Erlanger, KY 41018

DAV NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS STAFF USE ONLY:
Hours Verified Verified By _____ Date _____
Signature of DAV National Headquarters Representative _____