Benefits Protection Team Leader Program

Why do we need a Benefits Protection Team?

- Proposed elimination of veterans benefits
- Threats are real and cannot be ignored
- Strengthen our grassroots efforts
- Goal: redouble our advocacy efforts on behalf of the nation’s disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors
- To unify and solidify DAV’s critical message across the nation.
- To access the BPTL toolkit, click here.
Benefits Protection Team Leaders’ Duties

Benefits Protection Team Leader (BPTL) primary responsibilities:

- Supporting DAV’s legislative goals
- Coordinating local grassroots efforts
- Encouraging the resolution process at the chapter and department level
- Advocating for local issues that are not in conflict with national resolutions adopted at the national level or with department policies

All time spent on BPTL activities can be counted under the Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP)

- To report hours, please send an email containing your name, address, and the number of volunteer hours to VAVS@dav.org. Please remember to include a phone number where you can be reached in case of questions.
Benefits Protection Team Leaders’ Duties (cont.)

• Support DAV’s national legislative program (approved resolutions)

• Develop a local grassroots network made up of DAV members, family, friends

• Discuss key legislative issues at your DAV meetings

• Distribute DAV Commander’s Action Network (CAN) alerts at chapter and department meetings and encourage members to take action

• Develop a relationship with elected and VA officials in your area

• Communicate DAV position to elected officials
DAV’s Legislative Process & You

- DAV Resolutions → Mandates from Membership
- Legislative Program → Guided By Resolutions
- Advocacy Campaign → Get The Word Out
- Influence Elected Officials → Grassroots Advocacy
- Nonpartisan → Benefit Protection over Party

Curious About Your Role? Click Here!
Our Core Mission

• Our first duty is the rehabilitation and welfare of our wartime disabled

• We WILL NOT take action on any resolution based on other than wartime service-connected veterans

RESOLUTION NO. 001

DAV STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Disabled American Veterans was founded on the principle that this nation’s first duty to veterans is the rehabilitation and welfare of its wartime disabled. This principle envisions:

1. High-quality hospital and medical care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans with disabilities incurred in or aggravated by service in America’s armed forces.
2. Adequate compensation for the loss resulting from such service-connected disabilities.
3. Vocational rehabilitation and/or education to help the disabled veteran prepare for and obtain gainful employment.
4. Enhanced opportunities for employment and preferential job placement so that the remaining ability of the disabled veteran is used productively.
5. Adequate compensation to the surviving spouses and dependents of veterans whose deaths are held to be service-connected under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
6. Enhanced outreach to ensure that all disabled veterans receive all benefits they have earned and that the American people understand and respect the needs these veterans encounter as a result of their disabilities.

It therefore follows that we will not take action on any resolution that proposes legislation designed to provide benefits for veterans, their surviving spouses and dependents, which are based upon other than wartime service-connected disability.

We shall not oppose legislation beneficial to those veterans not classified as service-connected disabled, except when it is evident that such legislation will jeopardize benefits for service-connected disabled veterans.

While our first duty as an organization is to assist the service-connected disabled, their surviving spouses and dependents, we shall within the limits of our resources assist others in filing, perfecting and prosecuting their claims for benefits.

Since this represents the principle upon which our organization was founded and since it is as sound at this time as it was in 1920, we hereby reaffirm this principle as the policy for the Disabled American Veterans.
DAV Resolutions

• Mandates action by DAV and members

• National Constitution, Art. II – Purpose:
  • “…to advance the interests and work for the betterment of all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans….”

• National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.1:
  • “…participating in political issues which have a direct bearing upon the welfare of America’s disabled veterans.”

• National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.2, Para. 1:
  • “No member shall appear before any legislative body or speak in the name of the Organization…propounding a position contrary to any resolution then in effect....”

• National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.2, Para. 2:
  • “No federal legislation shall be sponsored or endorsed...in the name of the DAV...unless it has been approved [by the adoption of a resolution]....”

• National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.2, Para. 3:
  • Exceptions: any attempt to “repeal or deprive disabled veterans or their dependents of benefits already provided by law or regulation.” Or when the National Commander, National Adjutant or National Executive Committee deems support of legislation is beneficial to disabled veterans or their families.
DAV Resolutions

The Process:

• Membership Identifies the Issue
• Chapter, or Department, Introduces Resolution
• Department Endorses Resolution
• Sent to National Convention for Consideration
• Delegates Adopt or Reject Resolution
• Adopted Resolutions Make Up DAV’s Legislative Program

Legislative Staff is directed by adopted resolutions
How to Write a DAV Resolution

Construction:

• Title:
  
  SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REMOVE THE PROHIBITION AGAINST CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIRED PAY AND VETERANS’ DISABILITY COMPENSATION FOR ALL LONGEVITY RETIRED VETERANS

• Whereas Clauses:
  
  WHEREAS, current law provides that service connected veterans rated less than 50 percent who retire from the Armed Forces on length of service do not receive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in addition to full military retired pay; and
  WHEREAS, these disabled veterans must therefore surrender retired pay in an amount equal to the disability compensation they receive; and
  WHEREAS, this offset is unfair to veterans who have served faithfully in military careers inasmuch as these veterans have earned their retired pay by virtue of their long service to the Nation and wholly apart from disabilities due to military service; NOW

• Resolved Clause:
  
  THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Denver, Colorado, August 8-11, 2015, supports legislation to repeal the offset between military longevity retired pay and VA disability compensation.
BPTLs Reinforce National Legislative Efforts

To proactively support the introduction of DAV Resolutions:

• Encourage your elected officials to introduce bills based on a DAV Resolutions
• Encourage congressional staff to reach out to National Legislative Staff if they have questions
• Give national legislative staff a heads up if your member plans to introduce an important bill
Grassroots Taking Action

How It Works:

• Alerts and sample emails are sent out by National through the DAV CAN
• BPTL- Helps get the message out by sending an alert to their local grassroots network
• Follow up with elected officials on key legislative priorities
Call to Action

You receive an alert from DAV CAN:

What’s next?

• Get the word out!
  • Phone Calls- If urgent, like the revocation of benefits
  • Emails (BC/Blind Copy your network)
  • Share On Social Media
  • DAV Meetings- Share Info and Provide Updates

So what now?

• In the majority of cases, sending emails to your network and then following up to make sure they took action AND notified their network is all that you need to do
• In a few cases, you will need to take it to the next level
Emails, Calls, and Social Media

Expanding Our Reach

Building Our Networks

Educating

Creating A Tidal Wave of Involvement

You
Personal Contact with Elected Officials

- Phone Calls
- Office Visits
- Coordinate or Attend a Congressional Town Hall meeting
- It is critical to have regular contact with the elected officials in your area.

For a DAV invitation template, click here!
Personal Contact with Elected Officials

- Try to Prepare for Your Visit
- Provide talking points ahead of time
- Pick a spokesperson
- Know your issues
- Stay On Message
- Be friendly, be concise, and be NONPARTISAN

For a full set of guidelines, click here!
Post-Meeting Etiquette

- Thank elected officials or staffers for their time
- Give a brief synopsis of the talking points
- If you promised to give additional information that was previously unavailable, follow up

For a link to follow to up letters, click here!
Writing Campaigns

- It is important to convey to your team the importance of letter writing campaigns.
- While emails may be the most common, personal letters are still one of the most effective forms of communicating an issue.
- Written communications should be sent to the official’s district office rather than their Washington, DC office.
- For Legislative Letter Samples, click here.
Using Social Media

• Social media is the easiest way to get your message out to the largest audience

• In 2017, 98% of Congress was on Twitter

• Retweet DAV messages/alerts/calls to action

• Post messages on Facebook and LinkedIn

• If you blog, send a copy to the department or chapter website

• facebook.com/DAV
• youtube.com/disabledamericanveterans
• twitter.com/davhq
• instagram.com/davhq
• flickr.com/photos/thedav
• linkedin.com/company/48969
The Media

• The media can be used on important issues

Seek Assistance from Communication or Legislative Staff to:

• Send letters to the editor
• Contact an online newspaper
• Write an Op-Ed
• Reach out to local news stations
Op-Eds and other media requests should be sent through national legislative or communication staff first.
Coalitions

• Form a local veterans coalition on key issues
• Work together when possible-show a united front on common issues
• Share information so that everyone is on the same page and there is a clear message
• Pass our message on to other civic groups you belong to
Preparing for DAV Mid-Winter Conference

**BPTLs Role**

- Work with Department to schedule DC meetings with members of Congress (schedule 1-2 months ahead of Mid-Winter conference)
- Prepare your team for Hill meetings with DAV talking points
- Establish a spokesperson for each meeting
- In-state meeting during Mid-Winter
- Coordinate with members not coming to DC
- Encourage them to schedule local meetings
- Or make phone calls
- Provide DAV’s talking points

For sample Meeting Request Letters, click [here](#)

Talking Points will be posted three weeks prior to Mid-Winter at [this location](#).
Grasstops

What are “Grasstops”?

• “Grasstops” are individuals who have a personal or special relationship with a Member of Congress or key staff.
  • They have direct access to the member of Congress when necessary
  • Grasstops should be identified in your network.

For a better understanding of “Grasstops” click here!
Grasstops

- Identify Grasstops in your state
- Tell DAV legislative staff who these people are
- Know how they prefer to interact with Member of Congress
  - Personal contact
  - Phone Calls
  - Emails
  - Subject Matter they are willing to discuss
- *Use them sparingly*—important campaigns only
When Meeting with Members of Congress

Emphasize the work DAV does in your community...

**DAV provides:**
- Assistance With Claims and Appeals
- Transitional Services
- Rides to VA Facilities
- Job Fairs
- Scholarships
- Educational Seminars
- Disaster Relief
- Mobile Service Offices
- And so much more...
DAV Mobile Service Office

- MSOs can be a demonstrable way to show what DAV does in an elected officials district
- Encourage district offices to contact their constituents informing them when a MSO will be in their area
- DAV’s Primary Mission: ensure the nation’s sick and ill veterans, their families and survivors, receive their earned benefits and services
Federal and State Elections
Nonpartisan

Reminder: DAV is Non-Political, Non-Partisan

DON’T
• Support or oppose a candidate for office on behalf of DAV
• Take positions contrary to DAV national policy

DO
• Get involved
• Hold candidate forums for all candidates
• Inform candidates on DAV issues
• Encourage candidates to support issues benefiting disabled veterans
• Oppose ideas that negatively impact wartime ill and injured veterans – NOT the candidate
Questions?
Contact your National Legislative Staff
202.554.3501

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