



GRASSTOPS

Legislative changes are most often moved by emotions and nothing is more effective than speaking directly with an elected official about an important issue. GrassTops are people who have the connections to engage and influence your elected officials.

GrassTops are typically part of the elected official's "political family" and can include DAV members, former employees or staff, local activists, large campaign donors, their golfing or tennis partner, their neighbor, or actual family member.

GrassTops can engage their connected elected official by:

- Emailing or calling regarding a specific issue
- Having a formal or informal meeting with them
- Writing letters to the editor or op-eds that will reach them
- Organizing other GrassTops to advocate

It is important to reach out to potential GrassTops who are aligned with DAV's mission. Make sure to do your research so you know enough about them to understand why they would be willing to advocate on issues important to injured and ill veterans. Be prepared to share concise materials if they ask for more information.

Tips for engaging GrassTops:

- Identify influential community spokespeople who are willing to help
- Identify individuals who have an interest in veterans' issues and have a personal or professional connection to the elected official
- Create a contact list of people willing to help and keep track of:
 - Issues they are interested in supporting

- What they are willing to do—such as personal visits, phone calls, emails, letters to the editor or op-eds

If they are willing to advocate for DAV in their free time and communicate with the elected official they are connected to, there are two important things to remember: 1) the timing of their help is very important, and 2) ask for their help sparingly.

Grassroots and GrassTops advocacy can be used in conjunction with each other, and depending on the situation, one may be more heavily relied on than the other. But remember that both are an important part of the process and can result in more bang for your buck in effecting change and gathering attention towards DAV's most important issues.

Whatever the strategies are, relationships remain the core of any good advocacy. We can have 3,000 DAV-constituents call or email a member's office, and reinforce that by asking a GrassTops to make a call to the legislator, which can be the tipping point of getting the support needed. Key decision-makers often react to the "loudest voice," and informed and energized GrassTops advocates can be the most persuasive promoters for our issues.

Other methods of involving your GrassTops:

- Ask them to sign up for DAV CAN
- Briefings from you or DAV leadership on the important issue
- Meetings with elected officials
- News conference participation (with approval of and assistance from DAV National Legislative and Communications Departments)

DAV has developed a questionnaire to help you identify potential local GrassTops advocates for your program.