

Disabled American Veterans Department of North Dakota Tri-Annual News Bulletin

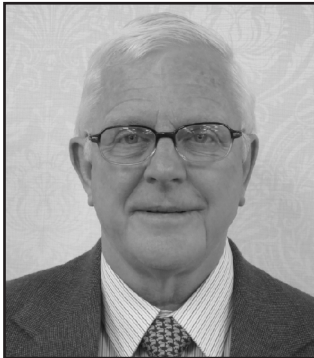


DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

2009 4th STREET NE - JAMESTOWN, ND 58401

SEPTEMBER 2014

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER REPORT



Rod Olin

Department Commander DAV

Greetings DAV Sisters and Brothers!! Thank you for your confidence in electing me Department Commander 2014-15. It has been a busy first part of the year. I represented our state at the South Dakota DAV Convention in Aberdeen in early May and then to Minot for the American Legion Convention in June. Hospitality was great. June 19th was our Veteran's Home picnic in Lisbon. Thanks to all those who cooked up and served the great meal. Thanks to

Chapters 2 and 3 for inviting me to their picnics. It was great to meet so many dedicated DAV members. Rain and cold could not dampen the enthusiasm in Grand Forks and Bismarck again received an unbelievable donation from the Freedom Riders Motorcycle Club.

The DAV National Convention in Las Vegas wrapped up on August 13th. What a great time it was to hear about all of the wonderful things DAV does around the United States. Congratulation to Mike Dobmeier who was elected again as National Judge Advocate and to Roy Fillion for receiving the DAV Outreach Program National Award!! They really helped

keep North Dakota on the DAV map. I was also honored to present checks from the Department and Chapter 3 to the National Service Foundation and Columbia Trust. Also getting stage time were Mike Vandrovec, General Resolutions chair; Warren Tobin, Credentials chair and Interim Membership committee member. Finally, the DAV membership elected Ron Hope of North Carolina as the new National Commander.

Membership is so crucial to our success in keeping our veteran's programs in play. Make sure someone is assigned as a mentor to your new members and get them involved a little at a time. In Washington, DC size dictates how much attention an organization gets and we can all do better **by belonging to the Auxiliary**. It only takes \$12.00 and YOU can make a difference.

Upcoming events: DAV Fall Conference October 11 in Valley City and District 14 Fall Conference October 17-18 in Fargo at the Biltmore on Main (former Kelly Inn). Call 701-281-9700 for reservations.

Let us continue to do our part and keep the DAV the best Veteran's Service Organization in the USA. We need to ensure that our ill and injured Veterans get the benefits that they earned and to fulfill the promises to the men and women who served their country. Also, please remember those who are still serving our great nation and wearing the uniform and also keep in mind the family members who serve on the home front. Thank you all for what you continue to do for our Veterans and for the DAV!

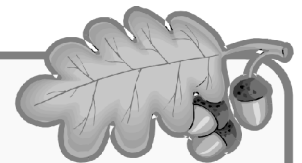
DAVA DEPARTMENT COMMANDER REPORT



Marissa Jackson

Department Commander DAVA

Thanks for electing me your DAV Auxiliary State Commander, I have enjoyed my term. We had an outstanding national convention. Congratulations to LeeAnn Karg our newly elected National Commander. LeeAnn is from Minnesota and she has been very active in District 14. Also, congratulations to our new 14th District NEC Joyce Jefferson and Alternate NEC, Nancy Worth, both from South Dakota. Let me know when you would like me to visit your Units. See you all at the fall conference and at the 14th District meeting.



Wishing A

Happy

Autumn

To All Our Veterans



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DAV FALL CONFERENCE
October 11, 2014
 Valley City, ND

DISTRICT 14 FALL CONFERENCE
October 17-18, 2014
 Biltmore on Main (formerly Kelly Inn)
 Fargo, ND

DAV MIDWINTER CONFERENCE
February 22-24, 2015
 Crystal Gateway Marriot
 Arlington, VA



Transportation Network Receives a Donated Van

The DAV Transportation Network of North Dakota received a 2014 Seven passenger Ford Flex during the National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada! The Ford Motor Company has once again made it possible for the DAV to purchase seven vehicles and the Fargo VA Healthcare System has been designated to receive one.

Thank you for all of your hard work to make your local Transportation Network such a wonderful service for the many veterans who have no other means of getting to their VA medical appointments. Ford's participation in DAV's Transportation Network Program enhances our ability to provide this much needed service.

DAV National Commander Joseph Johnston made the official donation to the Department of Veterans Affairs during the DAV National Convention, held in Las Vegas, Nevada in August. Mike Vandrovec from Chapter 1 drove the van home to Fargo following the convention.



DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS DEPARTMENT OF NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OFFICERS 2014-2015

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Dept. Web Site:
www.davmembersportal.org/nd/default.aspx

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2nd JR. VICE COMMANDER
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TREASURER
 Faye Litzinger

JUDGE ADVOCATE/INSP. GENERAL
 Jan Novontny

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DAV Gives Back to Warriors of the North

by Staff Sgt. Luis Loza Gutierrez
319th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

3/28/2014 - **GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE, N.D.** -- A local veterans' organization gave back to the Warriors of the North on March 27.

Scott Ross, senior vice commander of the Disabled Veterans of America, Andy Nomland Chapter 2 of Grand Forks, N.D., formally presented a check for \$500 to the Grand Forks Air Force Base 1st Sergeants' Council at Heritage Hall here.

"You can rest assured this will be put to good use," said Master Sgt. Michael Raby, 319th Comptroller Squadron first sergeant.

"Yes, this donation is going to help a lot of people," added Master Sgt. Genevieve Nordaune, 319th Operations Support Squadron first sergeant.

Ross solidified the DAV's confidence in the 1st Sergeants' Council to use the donation wisely by saying, "A lot of our members served here on Grand Forks [AFB] back in the day, myself included, and know the important role a first sergeant can play when a service member is in a time of need. We know this will make a positive difference and that's why we are very glad to make this donation."

This is not the first time the local DAV chapter has extended a helping hand in the form of a monetary donation.

According to Nordaune, the DAV donated \$200, but they more than doubled their normal donation this time around.

"Our DAV chapter has been very fortunate with our fundraising activities this year," said Ross, a retired Air Force master sergeant. "We just thought it would be nice to share some of that good fortune by giving a little extra this year."

The 1st Sergeants' Council plans on using the money for different charitable activities and programs throughout the year such as Operation Warmheart, which provides financial grants to Air Force families to buy food and other necessities during emergency situations.



A Big Thanks to Empire Liquors and Sam's Club of Fargo



Vince Dicks, Commander of Francis J. Beaton Chapter 1 of Fargo presented a clock plaque to John Swanick, Owner of Empire Liquors for his continued support of the DAV. He provides beverages and ice for picnics, District 14 and Department conferences. John's dad was a veteran and said he feels the need to support veterans in his area as much as he can. Thanks John!!



Chapter 1 recognized the continued Support of Sam's Club by providing a plaque and a Marine ball cap. The Fargo Sam's Club supports brat sales by the chapter. Pictured (L-R) Ron Jackson, Chapter 1 Member, Kathy Vandrovec (Unit 1 Member) Crystal Lewis (Sam's Club Manager and daughter of a USMC Veteran), and Mike Vandrovec (Department Judge Advocate).



Land of the Free! Home of the Brave!

THANK A VETERAN TODAY!

Highlights of the Presentation by VA Secretary Robert McDonald at the DAV Convention

The DAV Convention was the occasion where Secretary McDonald gave his first address as the new VA Secretary. He had previously met with DAV Senior Leadership and recognized the DAV for its great leadership and for focusing squarely on veterans and what is best for them.

He had just finish his first visit at the Phoenix VA Center – here is a summary of what he found. A. Bottom line—there are good people there. They care about serving Veterans, and they are working hard to fix that system so they can provide superior service to Veterans. B. I've learned over the years that it's the technicians and specialists—those closest to the customer—who provide the most innovative solutions. C. We are on their team, and they have our support.

The problems we discovered in Phoenix were systemic, extending well-beyond that one location. And the Phoenix story is about more than just a crisis in Veteran access. -- To be sure, it is a story of failed leadership -- But it is also a story about some dedicated people who have had the moral courage to stand up and help us serve Veterans better. So, my thanks to them.

Coming face-to-face with the reality some Veterans have endured isn't a disaster. It's opportunity. Testifying to Congress, our Deputy Secretary, Sloan Gibson, put it like this. He said, "We can turn these challenges into the greatest opportunity for improvement in the history of the Department."

The Secretary Continued: At VA, we are going to judge the success of our individual and collective efforts against a single metric—customer outcomes, Veterans' outcomes. VA's own Strategic Plan makes clear, "VA is a customer-service organization. We serve Veterans. If we fail at serving Veterans, we fail. We have a lot of work to do.

The Secretary continued discussing the way forward for the VA—

THE PROBLEMS

Here's how those systematic failures manifested themselves—you're pretty familiar with these. A. Veterans are waiting too long for care. B. Our scheduling system is antiquated and cumbersome. C. Our performance metrics were an end in themselves—they weren't measuring outcomes for Veterans. D. There were widespread attempts to "game the system"—this, of course, only hid the

problem, making Veterans wait even longer for care. E. Employees who were looking out for Veterans and identified systemic problems or poor leadership were sometimes punished for doing so. We didn't hold managers accountable who hid their poor performance or retaliated against whistleblowers. We failed to adequately assess and quantify the resources needed to provide care we are obligated to provide.

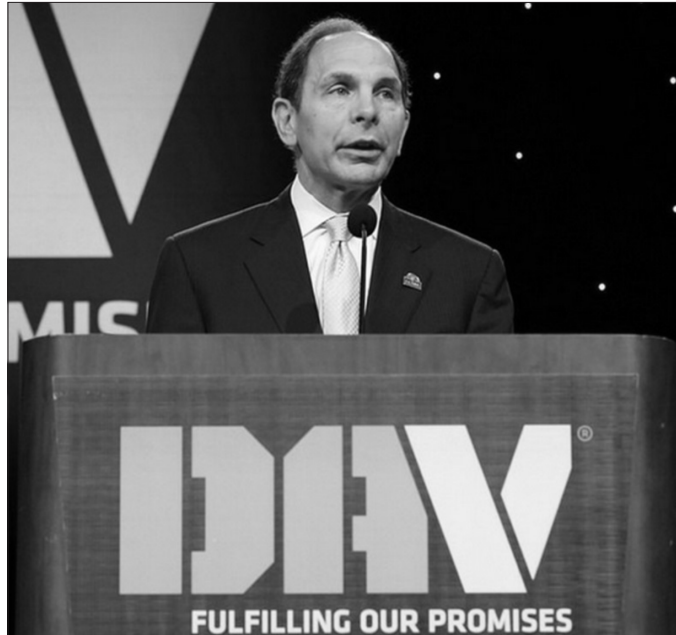
THE WAY AHEAD

We know that we cannot tackle all these issues long-term without critical cultural change and accountability. I think there are already seeds of that happening, perhaps in some unprecedented ways. Just consider this for a moment—from President Obama's nomination of a new Secretary of VA to confirmation and swearing-in, it took only 30 days [30 Jun –

30 Jul]. And the floor vote in the Senate was 97-0. That's not a commentary on me. It's a clear sign of a nation's extraordinary commitment to Veterans.

Thursday, President Obama signed the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 into law. Another significant showing of strong support for Veterans. That law allocates \$15 billion to VA over the next 3 years—that's \$5 billion to hire physicians and other medical staff and improve VA's infrastructure and \$10 billion to fund additional purchased care while we build the internal capability to meet current demand. The legislation also authorizes VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases in 18 states and Puerto Rico to give VA more space for clinicians to treat patients. And it grants VA new authority to remove or transfer senior executives based on poor performance or misconduct—accountability.

In addition, we are improving communication between the field and the central office, between employees and leadership, and with DAV and other Veterans Service Organizations and stakeholders. Collaborating closely with VSOs is a top priority if we are going to make the right changes in the days ahead. And it is not enough to listen to your concerns, thoughts, and ideas. We have to strengthen our collaboration in changing the Department. So VA leadership at Central Office and in the field is going to work with DAV at all levels and improve communications. Right now, Veterans are in need, and we have much work to do to transform VA into the provider of choice for Veterans' healthcare. But we cannot do it without you.



VA Secretary Robert McDonald

VA Moves to Streamline Identification to Rural Land Areas

Changes Will Improve Service Delivery to Veterans

WASHINGTON – In order to more accurately identify and serve rural Veterans, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is improving the method it uses to define urban, rural and highly rural land areas.

“The Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to providing high quality health care to Veterans when and where they need it, including rural and highly rural areas of the country,” said Secretary Robert McDonald. “With this change, we will be better able to deliver services to Veterans when and where they need them.”

The current method is being replaced by a more accurate method, modeled on one used by other leading federal agencies. It is anticipated that implementation will begin before October 1, 2014. The Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA) system, developed by the departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration, has become more accepted because of its sound social science basis and its adaptability for special programs.

“VHA strives to provide high-quality, accessible health care to all enrolled Veterans,” said Interim Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Carolyn Clancy. “However, we must know where rural Veterans live in order to provide adequate access to care. This requires the best possible definition of 'rural' land areas. With this change, VHA will be able to better serve this important Veteran population.”

Improving VHA's method for identifying urban, rural and highly rural Veterans will result in more accurate identification of rural Veterans, improved reporting of the number and location of rural Veterans and of statistics on their geographic access to sites of care along with improved allocation of resources and improved research on rural Veterans' needs.

Currently, 3.2 million rural Veterans are enrolled in the VA system, which represents 36 percent of the total enrolled Veteran population.

For a more detailed explanation of the change, visit the [VA Office of Rural Health website](#).



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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS



FRANCIS J. BEATON Chapter No. 1

Fargo, North Dakota

Meetings Held 2nd Thursday of each month

Upcoming 2014 Fall Conferences

2014 Fall Conference

The Department of North Dakota DAV/DAVA Fall Conference will be held at the VFW Club, Valley City, on Saturday, October 11, 2014. The meeting begins at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday and is expected to be done by early afternoon.

There are several motels located in Valley City. Among them are the Super 8 (1-800-800-8000 (national toll free) or 845-1140) and the Wagon Wheel Inn (845-5333).

Activities begin on Friday evening with the Chapter 24 DAV and Auxiliary Auction. Coffee and donuts will be available Saturday morning.

District 14

The 14th District Fall Conference for the DAV and DAV Auxiliary will be held at the Biltmore on Main (formerly the Kelly Inn), on Main Avenue in Fargo, ND. The event will be held on Saturday, October 18, 2014.



The Kelly Inn (701-281-9700) is located at the junction of Interstate Highway 29 and Main Avenue in Fargo. (Approximately 2 miles north of Highway I-94)

Thirty Three (33) rooms have been set aside in the name of the DAV for Friday, October 17th at a cost of \$74.70 for a double room. The Kelly Inn will only hold these rooms until October 1st, so please make your reservations as soon as possible.

Please be advised that a reception, i.e., hospitality room, will be hosted by the 14th District on Friday evening from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in Rooms 174, 175, and 176 of the Kelly Inn. The 14th District will

also be hosting a breakfast at 8:00 a.m. in the O'Malley room of the Kelly Inn on Saturday morning.

Also be advised the District meeting will be held in the O'Ryan Room of the Kelly Inn beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday morning. The Auxiliary meeting is also slated to begin at 9:00 a.m. in the O'Leary Room at the Kelly Inn.

VA Announces New Grants to Help End Veterans Homelessness

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald today announced the award of approximately \$300 million in grants that will help approximately 115,000 homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. The grants will be distributed to 301 community agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is awarding grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that provide services to very low-income Veteran families living in – or transitioning to – permanent housing. Those community organizations provide a range of services that promote housing stability among eligible very low income Veteran families (those making less than 50 percent of the area median income). The grants announced today will fund the fourth year of the SSVF program.

“By working with community non-profit organizations, we have enlisted valuable partners in our fight to end homelessness,” said McDonald. “The work of SSVF grantees has already helped thousands of homeless Veterans and their families find homes and thousands more have been able to stay in their own homes.”

Under the terms of the grants, homeless providers will offer Veterans and their family members outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits and assistance in receiving other public benefits.

Community-based groups can offer temporary financial assistance on behalf of Veterans for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits and moving costs.

In 2009, President Obama announced the Federal government's goal to end Veteran homelessness by 2015. The grants are intended to help accomplish that goal. According to the 2013 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness, homelessness among Veterans has declined 24 percent since 2009.

“We want to make sure our Veterans receive the care and support that they have earned and deserve,” McDonald added. “This is a program that, indeed, makes a difference.”

Through the Eliminating Veteran Homelessness Initiative, VA committed over \$1 billion in FY 2014 to strengthen programs that prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. VA provides a range of services to homeless Veterans, including health care, housing, job training, and education.

More information about VA's homeless programs is available at www.va.gov/homeless. Details about the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program are online at www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp.

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HUD, VA, and USICH Announce 33% Drop in Veteran Homelessness since 2010

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) today released a new national estimate of veteran homelessness in the United States. Data collected during the annual Point-in-Time Count conducted in January 2014 shows there were 49,933 homeless veterans in America, a decline of 33 percent (or 24,837 people) since 2010. This includes a nearly 40 percent drop in the number of veterans sleeping on the street.

HUD, VA, USICH, and local partners have used evidenced-based practices like Housing First and federal resources like HUD-VASH (the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing voucher program) to get veterans off the street and into stable housing as quickly as possible. Since 2008, the HUD-VASH program has served a total of 74,019 veterans.

“We have an obligation to ensure that every veteran has a place to call home,” said U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro. “In just a few years, we have made incredible progress reducing homelessness among veterans, but we have more work to do. HUD will continue collaborating with our federal and local partners to ensure that all of the men and women who have served our country have a stable home and an opportunity to succeed.”

“The Department of Veterans Affairs and our federal and local partners should be proud of the gains made reducing Veterans' homelessness,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald, “but so long as there remains a Veteran living on our streets, we have more work to do.”

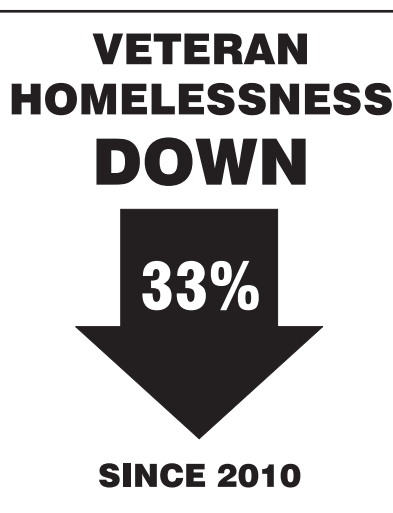
“As a nation, we have proven that homelessness is a problem we can solve,” said U.S. Interagency Council on

Homelessness Executive Director Laura Green Zeilinger. “Communities all across the country are meeting this costly tragedy with urgency and a focus on helping all veterans and their families achieve safe and stable housing.”

To accelerate progress on meeting the goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2015, First Lady Michelle Obama launched the Administration's “Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness” in spring 2014. So far, more than 210 mayors, county, and state officials have committed to ending homelessness among veterans in their communities.

The federal government has provided significant new resources to help communities pursue the goal of ending homelessness among veterans. Communities that target these resources strategically are making significant progress and can end veteran homelessness in their communities in 2015. These strategies include:

- Using a Housing First approach, which removes barriers to help veterans obtain permanent housing as quickly as possible, without unnecessary prerequisites;
- Prioritizing the most vulnerable veterans—especially those experiencing chronic homelessness—for permanent supportive housing opportunities, including those created through the HUD-VASH program;
- Coordinating outreach efforts to identify and engage every veteran experiencing homelessness and focus outreach efforts on achieving housing outcomes;
- Targeting rapid rehousing interventions, including those made possible through the Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, toward veterans who need shorter-term rental subsidies and services in order to be reintegrated back into our communities;
- Leveraging other housing and services resources that can help veterans who are ineligible for some of the VA's programs get into stable housing;
- Increasing early detection and access to preventive services so at-risk veterans remain stably housed;
- Closely monitoring progress toward the goal, including the success of programs achieving permanent housing outcomes; and
- Aligning local goals and strategies with Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.



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American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Dedication to be Held in October

The dedication ceremony for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will be held on October 5, 2014 at 11:00 a.m. at the Memorial site, 150 Washington Ave., SW (Washington Ave. & Second St. SW). Check in and registration opens at 8:30 a.m., the Dedication Ceremony begins at 11:00 a.m. and will conclude at 1:00 p.m. and gates are open until 3:00 p.m.



President Barack Obama and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald have been invited to speak at this historic occasion, more than 15 years in the making. Actor Gary Sinise, National Spokesman of The American Veterans

Disabled for Life Memorial, has confirmed his participation in the dedication ceremony. "We are honored and thrilled to make this announcement today," said Foundation President Arthur H. Wilson. "It's been a long journey, but well worth the wait. At last we are in the home stretch of building a memorial to honor the countless veterans who became disabled in service to our country."

Unlike other national memorials, The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will pay tribute to disabled veterans both living and deceased across all conflicts throughout the nation's history. The design of the Memorial, by the acclaimed firm Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, envisions a hallowed place amid the bustle of the surrounding Washington

streets. Vergason's design was meant expressly for its audience – disabled veterans, their loved ones, friends and caretakers – who will now have a place for commemoration and quiet reflection.

The Memorial was unanimously authorized by Congress in 2000, and signed into law on October 24, 2000 by President Clinton. The 2.4-acre triangular site, located between Washington Avenue SW, C Street SW and Second Street SW, behind the U.S. Botanic Garden and within view of the U.S. Capitol, was approved in 2001. The final design was approved in 2009 and 2010 by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission respectively.

Through the juxtaposition of granite and glass, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial conveys a combination of strength and vulnerability, loss and renewal. At this sacred spot, all of us—sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, wives, husbands and friends—have the opportunity to learn the important lessons of courage, sacrifice, tenacity, loyalty and honor by bearing witness to the experiences of our heroes who are disabled.

The focal point of the Memorial is a star-shaped fountain, its surface broken only by a single ceremonial flame. A grove of trees stands sentry beside the reflecting pool, signifying the persistence of hope.

Dedicated to both the living and the deceased—a setting for coming together or quiet meditation—the Memorial holds a special place in the hearts of all Americans, and serves as a never-ending reminder to all of the cost of human conflict.

VETERANS DAY – NOVEMBER 11

With Respect and Honor We Thank You

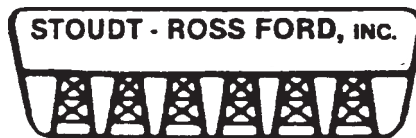
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ANDY NOMLAND
Chapter No. 2

Grand Forks, North Dakota

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Past Natl. Commander

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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS



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Valley City, North Dakota

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VA Expands Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) Contracts to Provide Access to Primary Care

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has today that primary care has been added to the services available to Veterans through VA's Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) contracts, a key and evolving part of the non-VA medical care program. Eligible Veterans are already able to access inpatient specialty care, outpatient specialty care, mental health care, limited emergency care and limited newborn care for female Veterans following childbirth under PC3.

"With the addition of primary care services, VA Medical Centers can now use PC3 to provide additional types of care in order to reduce wait times," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "This modification is another example of how we are working to ensure Veterans get the care they need, when they need it and where they want to be seen."

This modification supports VA's Accelerated Care Initiative, helping to move Veterans off of waitlists and into care. Additionally, reduced commuting standards will require that contracted providers schedule appointments closer to the Veterans' homes.

The initial PC3 contracts were awarded in September 2013 to Tri-West and HealthNet and have been used as part of the non-VA medical care program to purchase care in the community.

"PC3 is part of the overall non-VA medical care program," said Dr. Carolyn A. Clancy, VA's Interim Under Secretary for Health. "We look forward to expanding our ability to provide timely access to health care services to our Veterans."

VA Medical Centers have the ability to purchase non-VA medical care for Veterans through contracted medical providers when they cannot readily provide the needed care due to geographic inaccessibility or limited capacity. This additional option is available to purchase non-VA medical care when required Veteran care services are unavailable within the VA medical facility, or when Veterans benefit from receiving the needed care nearer to their homes. In addition, VA is reviewing how PC3 may be used to help implement the newly enacted Veterans Choice, Access, and Accountability Act of 2014.

Through PC3, Veterans can expect to receive high-quality health care that is coordinated with their VA providers. For more information on PC3, visit <http://www.nonvacare.va.gov/PC3/index.asp>.

Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act

On August 7, President Obama signed the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146), which is intended to address the VA health care access crisis. This bipartisan, bicameral compromise bill - while a welcome first step toward rebuilding VA's capacity to provide all enrolled veterans with timely, high-quality health care - must be the beginning of a long-term effort to restore America's sacred compact with those who have fought for our freedom.

The law creates a new - and temporary - authority for VA to provide veterans with a "Veterans Choice Card" that can be used to access private care when VA is unable to provide veterans with care under defined time or distance access standards of 30 days or 40 miles. However, the law anticipates that this new authority will continue for no more than 3 years, or until the emergency funding (\$10 billion) is exhausted, whichever comes first.

As enacted, the law did not spell out all of the details concerning when and how veterans will receive "Choice" cards, how veterans will be "authorized" by VA to access private care options, how private providers will bill VA, not veterans, or how VA will coordinate non-VA care to ensure the best health outcomes for veterans. The law requires VA to publish detailed regulations within 90 days of enactment (November 5, 2014) and we will be carefully monitoring this process and consulting with VA through the law's implementation, especially the "Choice" provisions.

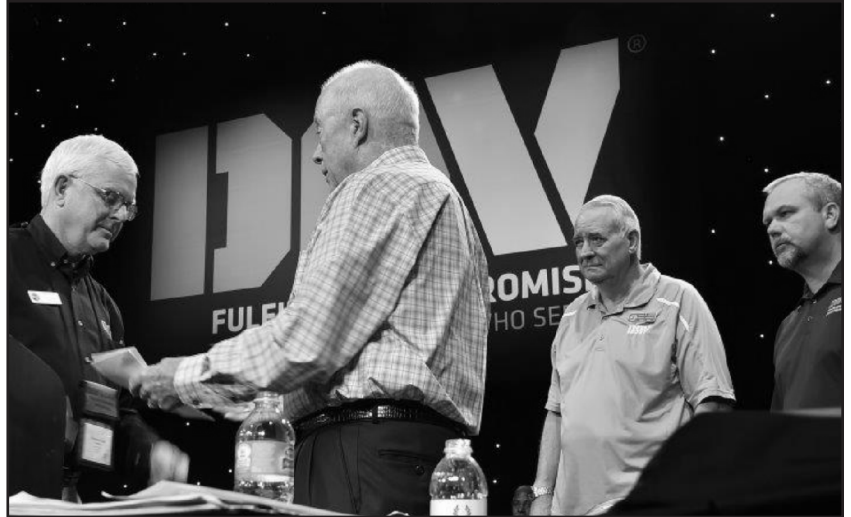
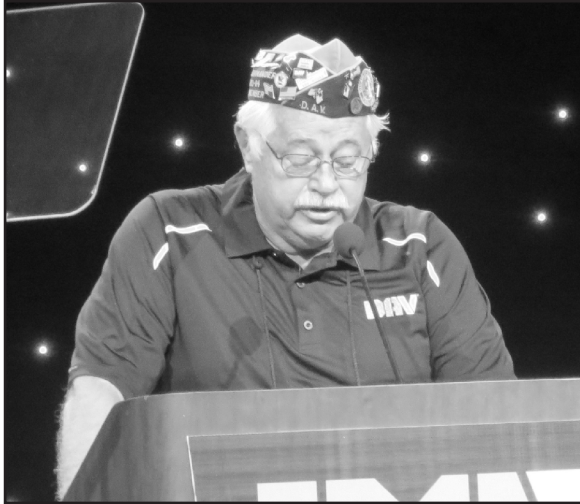
The new law also appropriates more than \$5 billion for the VA to hire additional medical staff, expand treatment space and repair existing health care facilities. It also authorizes 27 new leases for VA medical facilities in 18 states and Puerto Rico, primarily outpatient clinics. The lack of treatment slots and facilities was the primary cause of VA's access crisis and this boost in funding is a reasonable down payment on VA's long term structural needs.

Looking ahead, what's needed next is a commitment and matching action by Congress and the Administration to provide full and honest funding and additional support required by VA to boost its internal capacity so it can provide timely, accessible and high-quality health care to all veterans who need such care, particularly once the new "Choice" provisions expire in a couple of years.

While no veteran should be forced to wait too long or travel too far to get care, we hope this turn to the private sector is viewed and accepted only as a temporary stop-gap while the VA rebuilds its internal capacity.



Local Highlights from the National Convention held in Las Vegas



Above Left: Chapter 1 member, Mike Vandrovec, addresses the Convention. Mike was chair of the General Resolutions Committee.

Above: Department Commander Rod Olin hands department and chapter donations to the National Service Foundation and DAV Columbia Trust to Board Chair Art Wilson as National Commander Joe Johnston and National Marc Burgess observe.



Below Left: Roy Fillion receives congratulations from National Commander Joe Johnston for his performance as DVOP Specialist of the Year.



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Chapter No. 4

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DAV NSOs More Important Than Ever



Michael Medhaug
DAV Fargo National Service Office
Supervisor

Filing a disability claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs has always been easier and more efficient with the help of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization. But seeking DAV's help may be more important now than ever before with the Veterans Benefits Administration's Fully Developed Claims (FDC) program. Over the past several years, much attention has been rightly focused on efforts to reform VBA's claims processing

system and reduce the unacceptable backlog of pending disability compensation claims. There are now statistically significant signs of progress. That progress, which has been made at least in part because more and more veterans are taking advantage of the FDC program. The FDC is an optional initiative that offers veterans and survivors faster decisions from VA on compensation, pension and survivor benefits claims. Veterans and survivors simply submit all relevant records in their possession and certify that they have no further evidence to submit. The VA can then review and process the claim more quickly. A veteran can have his or her claim processed much faster and more accurately if the package is put together correctly, which is where a DAV National Service Officer is prepared to assist. While it is as straightforward as possible, it can be rendered useless if the

claim is not assembled correctly.

DAV's National Service officers have been intimately involved with the transition, with unmatched access to the decision makers within the VA, and there is no other veterans service organization more familiar with the ins and outs of the FDC program. The FDC program is unique because the claimant is actively involved in the process, gathering evidence needed to adequately reach a determination. However, the concept is not new. For decade, DAV and other VSOs have been able to submit a complete "fully developed" or "ready-to-rate" claim to VBA. DAV NSOs have long urged claimants to obtain as much of the evidence as possible prior to submitting the claim. However, prior to the inception of the current FDC program, claims considered "fully developed" were handled on a case-by-case basis. There was no formal program with standard procedures or consistency throughout VBA. Even though these claims required less work by VBA and should have resulted in quicker decisions, they were too often treated as just another claim, often sitting for months or years awaiting decisions.

An FDC still requires the completion of several forms and the compilation of records and medical opinions, the VA is rightfully recommending every claimant work with a VSO when filing an FDC. With this tremendous breakthrough and the increasing need for help with claims, DAV has grown its NSO corps to historic highs, with about 280 highly-trained NSOs on staff around the country. If you are need of representation, contact a DAV NSO today. At <http://www.dav.org/veterans/find-your-local-office> offices can be located online. [Source: DAV Newsletter | Joseph Chenelly | May 21, 2014 ++]



AMERICAN VETERANS HEROES EVERYDAY

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Golden Corral Sponsors Military Appreciation Monday Events

November 17, 2014

Supported by ND Chapters 1 and 3



Golden Corral's 13th Annual Military Appreciation Monday dinner was a huge success honoring over 433,500 veterans and active duty military with a free dinner buffet and beverage. All Golden Corral restaurants nationwide participated in this event to honor our military heroes, past and present.

Golden Corral restaurants and guests contributed a record total of over \$1,409,000 for the Disabled American Veterans organization to be used by state and local chapters to assist veterans. This is the fourth consecutive year that Golden Corral restaurants and their guests have raised over \$1 million dollars for the DAV.

To date, Golden Corral restaurants have provided over 4 million free meals and contributed over \$8.7 million the Disabled American Veterans organization.

Answers to some common questions.

Q: What is the date for 2014?

A: Monday, November 17, 2014 From 5:00 to 9:00 pm.

Q: What identification do I need to provide?

A: No identification is required for the service member.

Q: Who is eligible for the free "thank you" dinner?

A: Any person who has served in the US Military (retirees, veterans, active duty, National Guard or Reserves)

Q: Why does Golden Corral provide this dinner?

A: Our Corporation is very proud of the men and women who are serving or who have served, and we are honored to offer this special night to congratulate them in person.

Q: Can I bring my family?

A: We know that spouses, children, mothers and fathers deserve a heart-felt thank you, too, for their own personal sacrifices here at home. Family and friends are welcome to come join the celebration for our military heroes; however, the free "thank you" dinner is for the person who served. Other guests will pay the regular dinner menu pricing.

Nelson County Arts Council Presents Veterans Art Exhibit

Nelson County Arts Council (NCAC) of Pekin, ND is doing a veterans Art Exhibit November 9th-15th. If you know of any Veterans that are artists and would be interested please pass on this information. Thank you so much. To request entry forms, contact Jennifer Parker or download the application from the website. If you have any questions, comments or interests of sorts please contact:

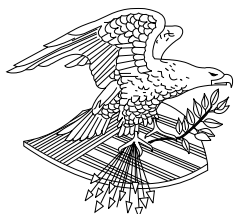
Jennifer N. Parker

701-262-4437

Email: nelsoncountyarts.com

Website:

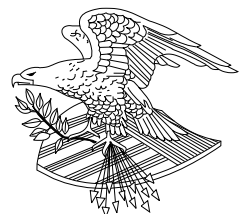
www.nelsoncountyarts.com/2014/06/13/veterans-art-exhibit/



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VA Releases New Version of the GI Bill® Comparison Tool

Online Resource Provides Student Veterans with Key Education and Benefits Information

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today launched an improved version of the [GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#), which was first launched in February 2014. The GI Bill Comparison Tool is designed to make it easier for Veterans, Servicemembers, and dependents to estimate their GI Bill education benefits and learn more about VA's approved college, university, and other education and training programs across the country. It also provides key information about college affordability and value so beneficiaries can choose the best education program to meet their needs.

In the past 6 months, nearly 350,000 people have accessed the tool on VA's GI Bill website. The top schools searched by users include: American Public University, Harvard, University of Texas at Austin, Arizona State University, and University of Washington.

"We are excited to see how Veterans respond to the wealth of information now available on the updated GI Bill Comparison Tool" said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "We're grateful for the chance to work with our partners at the departments of Defense and Education (ED) to ensure beneficiaries are informed education consumers."

The updated version of the GI Bill Comparison Tool has new functionality, including a more robust GI Bill benefits calculator and additional information pertinent to the Veteran population (e.g., identifies schools with student Veteran groups, VetSuccess on Campus program, and those that have agreed to the 8 Keys to Success). The GI Bill calculator provides a personalized estimate of Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition and fee, housing allowance, and book stipend benefits that would potentially be paid to the student. The calculator prepopulates the tuition and fee estimates from the ED's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The Veteran indicator section now contains new information on schools' student Veterans

groups, VetSuccess on Campus program and Yellow Ribbon agreement status.

The GI Bill Comparison Tool is one item in a series of resources VA has launched in response to the President's Executive Order 13607, signed April 27, 2012, which directs agencies to implement and promote "Principles of Excellence" for educational institutions that interact with Veterans, Servicemembers and their families; and to ensure beneficiaries have the information they need to make informed choices about VA education benefits and approved programs. As students return to school this fall, VA is committed to providing the support and information they need to succeed.

Since April 2012, VA has deployed the GI Bill Comparison Tool, the [GI Bill Feedback System](#), and offered a free academic-readiness tool online. In addition, VA, the Department of Education and Department of Defense have agreed to new Veteran-specific outcome measures and signed a memorandum of understanding to exchange information, which will ensure greater compliance from schools receiving military and Federal education benefits. VA

successfully trademarked GI Bill to prevent its fraudulent use for recruiting purposes and to protect this publicly-owned intellectual property. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a comprehensive education benefit created by Congress in 2008. Veterans and Servicemembers who have served on active duty for 90 or more days since Sept. 10, 2001 are eligible for the benefit. The Veterans Benefits Administration, which administers the Post-9/11 GI Bill program, has distributed more than \$43 billion in the form of tuition and other

education-related payments to more than one million Veterans, Servicemembers, and their families; and to the universities, colleges, and trade schools they attend. The GI Bill Comparison Tool can be found at: www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/comparison.



Above: Commander Steve Benson, Chapter 2 and Past Dept. Commander Tom Saddler present Dennis Braley his "300 Hour VA Volunteer Certificate".

Right: Commander Steve Benson, Chapter 2 and Past Dept. Commander Tom Saddler present Paul Smart his "100 Hour VA Volunteer Certificate".



Volunteers We Couldn't Do It Without You!

What About Attorneys and Their Fees? On Dealing with Attorneys, VA Claims and Fees

Reprinted from DAV Non-Profit Advisor

For weal or woe, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) is now twenty-five years young, or old, depending on your point of view. As promised at the outset, and delivered year after year, DAV has been the most prominent veterans service organization at CAVC since its inception. Many veterans remain confused about the role of attorneys in the VA claims process now that judicial review has become a fully integrated part of the benefits adjudication system. This article attempts to answer some of the more commonly asked questions.

Is there any good reason to use an attorney (and not DAV) to represent me at VA ?

There may be a good reason to engage a lawyer instead of DAV. However, we have not yet found that reason.

Weren't attorneys barred from representing veterans at VA for a long time?

Attorneys were never so barred. For more than 150 years, there has been some kind of limitation on the fee that an attorney can charge a veteran. The limitation has eased considerably in recent years, but is still there and is still meaningful.

Can an attorney charge me for filing an initial claim?

No. The pertinent statute clearly states that no fee may be charged for representation on any claim until the filing of a Notice of Disagreement (NOD) following an initial adverse decision. There is, however, a VA General Counsel opinion stating that attorneys may charge a fee for pre-filing consultations that occur prior to an initial claim for benefits. Some lawyers may use this as a way of skirting the no-fee rule. This is just one of many reasons to use DAV's outstanding service officers for representation in all matters before the VA, whether on initial claim, appeal or remand.

How much can the attorney charge me?

The fees "may be based on a fixed fee, hourly rate, a percentage of benefits recovered or [some combination thereof]." In addition, the fees must be reasonable. VA presumes that fees up to 20% of past-due benefits are reasonable and that fees in excess of 3 1/3% of past-due benefits are unreasonable. Fee agreements for representation at VA must be filed with the Office of the VA General Counsel.

Will VA pay my lawyer directly out of past-due benefits?

The VA will do this only if a properly-filed fee agreement that you and your attorney have signed authorizes it and, even then, only if the fee is limited to 20% of past-due benefits and when the fee is a purely contingent ("no win, no pay") obligation. This direct-payment provision is favored by attorneys and is probably the single most influential factor in the limitation of attorney fees.

What about representation at the Board of Veterans Appeals?

The BVA is part of the VA and the same rules apply. Do the fee rules change if I must appeal my case to the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims? An attorney fee agreement for representation at CAVC must be filed with the court. Generally speaking, the same type of arrangements that are permitted at VA are permitted at the court. In both venues, the overarching requirement is that the fee be "reasonable." At the court it may be possible for appellants (veterans) to recover attorney fees from the government if it turns out that the government's position that led to the appeal (i.e., the denial of benefits) was "substantially unjustified." This fee recovery takes place pursuant to the "Equal Access to Justice Act" (EAJA). Many attorneys will take a veteran's case to CAVC and agree to work only for the EAJA fees, should they be awarded. The bottom line is that you must read any attorney fee agreement very carefully. Get help from a third party if there is any aspect of the agreement that you do not understand. (By the way, DAV cannot be the third party.) When you sign a fee agreement, you enter into a binding contract that can be very difficult, if not impossible, to nullify.

What happens if the CAVC sends my case back to the VA for correction or additional action?

This outcome, which is quite routine, is called a remand. When your case is returned to VA, your DAV power of attorney automatically takes effect again. Many attorneys will seek to continue representing you at VA after a court remand. BE CAREFUL!!! Just because an attorney represented you at CAVC does not mean that you must, or should, continue with that attorney at VA. Agency remands sometimes lead to large retroactive payments and, depending on the terms of your attorney representation agreement, you may be giving up a big chunk of that payment for the attorney to do something that your DAV National Service Officer will do for free!



Notes from the VA Medical Center and VA Regional Office

Medical Center Update

In light of recent reports of patient appointment schedule manipulation throughout the country, the Fargo VAHCS was recently inspected and found to have no problem areas. A new physician has been recruited for the Grafton CBOC and will probably start working in December.

The new VA clinic in Devils Lake opened August 18th. It is primarily a telemedicine clinic with occasional site visits by medical providers. The western CBOC initiative is a liberalized fee basis program that gives local VA providers more flexibility with referring patients to private testing and specialty care. For now, it affects the CBOCs in western North Dakota.

Regional Office Update

Many burial benefits are now being paid automatically to surviving family members. The \$300 burial allowance is being paid to the survivors of veterans who receive compensation or pension benefits. The \$2,000 allowance is paid to survivors of veterans with 100% service connected disability ratings if they appear to meet other eligibility criteria. Next of kin must apply for the plot allowance. They also apply for the \$2,000 benefit if the veteran passed away due to service connected disabilities rated less than 100%. An application is required for the transportation allowance. The VA wants death certificates in these cases. A statement of account from the funeral home is not needed unless the claimant applies for the transportation allowance. The VA no longer pays burial benefits to funeral homes and will not reimburse counties for indigent burials. If there is no surviving next of kin, the VA will pay the first person who applies for burial benefits. Please use the new VA Form 21P-530 as needed.

Ms. Paula Conard (Regional Office Manager) also discussed audiology claims. Veterans should receive the benefit of the doubt when service treatment records indicate insufficient testing (such as a whisper test) upon separation from service. She also discussed Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) exams, which consist essentially of records

review and telephone interviews with veterans. The ACE program is designed to increase claim processing capacity and reduce the burden on veterans. It can be used in several types of claims, not just audiology. However, concerns were raised concerning the validity of the process because veterans are being caught off guard by a phone call from the VA and don't always understand the purpose of the call. Ms. Conard suggested counseling veterans that the VA may call them, examine them, or both.

Centralized mail has been in effect for about a month. Mail goes directly to a processing center, where documents are scanned within five working days and are available to raters. However, if you are sending your correspondence through a POA, that mail still goes directly to the POA. The contractor for this region who processes and scans documents is SMS from Janesville, WI.

The disability benefits questionnaire (DBQ) for ischemic heart disease (VA Form 21-0960A1) is discouraged because it is too narrow in scope. The VA prefers the DBQ for heart conditions (VA Form 21-0960A4) because it contains more useful information.

Prosthetics (Emily Dank, Chief)

Veterans who need scooters will be evaluated by a VA primary care provider, and then referred to occupational therapy for further evaluation. The request then goes to the major medical equipment committee which usually meets every two weeks. The decision is based on medical need. If the request is approved by the committee, the veteran gets the scooter. Veterans who are unable to travel to Fargo may be evaluated locally on a fee basis arrangement.



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Tom Saddler
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