



**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA**

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TO: DEPARTMENT OFFICERS, DEC, CHAPTERS, AND AUXILIARY UNITS

FROM: DAN FRANCIS, COMMANDER AND MARTY PENNOCK, ADJUTANT

SUBJECT: DECEMBER 2022 DAV MONTHLY REPORT

DATE: DECEMBER 1st, 2022

INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS MONTHLY REPORT IS TO BE PRESENTED AT YOUR MONTHLY MEETING EITHER BY THE DEC REPRESENTATIVE OR ADJUTANT. YOU SHOULD TRY TO HIGHLIGHT EACH OF THESE ARTICLES FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP MEETING. YOU MAY USE ANY OF THESE ARTICLES FOR YOUR CHAPTER NEWSLETTER.

1. POPULATION SUMMARY: Life membership discount running through March 15th, 2023.



Population Summary

Execution Date: 11/29/2022 2:56:16 PM

DCU No	DCU Name	Current Year				Goal			
		Total Trial	Total Part Life	Total Full Life	Total Paid Members	Total Members	Goal	Goal %	Goal Variance
40	Department of South Dakota	0	98	4,469	4,567	4,567	4,655	98.11%	-88
1	Arthur H Muchow #1	0	28	1,921	1,949	1,949	1,962	99.34%	-13
3	Rapid City #3	0	31	1,218	1,249	1,249	1,270	98.35%	-21
4	Coyote State #4	0	25	60	85	85	85	100.00%	0
6	Watertown #6	0	2	173	175	175	184	95.11%	-9
11	Northern Hills #11	0	8	355	363	363	370	97.84%	-8
13	Swanson O Connor #13	0	0	271	271	271	276	97.10%	-8
18	Oahe #18	0	3	214	217	217	227	95.59%	-10
19	Milbank-sisseton #19	0	1	88	89	89	97	91.75%	-8
22	Brookings #22	0	0	139	139	139	148	93.92%	-9
27	Davison County #27	0	0	30	30	30	36	83.33%	-8
Active		At Large		Merged	On Hold	Revoked	Suspended		
9		1		3	0	1	0		

2. SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COUNCIL: *The next SDVC meeting will take place January 11th, 2023*, at the American Legion Post 8 in Pierre. The meeting will run from 2pm to 5pm (CST) and will be followed by a Legislative reception that will run from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. All are welcome!

3. CHRISTMAS MORNING AT THE SIOUX FALLS VA MEDICAL CENTER: The DAV, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Vietnam Veterans of America members will host the VA Patients Christmas Party at the VA Medical Center, on Christmas morning, December 25th. You are invited to assist with providing our Christmas gifts of quilts, Veterans baseball caps, socks, gloves, and DAV Coffee mugs. *Please join us to drop them the gifts at the entrance of the VA Medical Center before Christmas on December 23rd, 2022. We will be leaving the DAV at 10:00 a.m.*

4. DAV HOSPITAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK: The 2022-2023 DAV Transportation Network and Columbia Trust Grant Application has not been received yet. To date the following have contacted the Department about purchasing vehicles in 2022-2023: Winner (Explorer). Mobridge has been removed from the list.

2023 Vehicles and pricing

Vehicle Information			Memo Information		
Year	Make	Seats	Cost/Vehicle Rounded	55% Min Share Rounded	Grant Amount w/ Min Share
2023	Explorer Base	7	\$38,402.00	\$21,121.00	\$17,281.00
2023	Explorer 4WD XLT	7	\$40,282.00	\$22,155.00	\$18,127.00
2023	T350 RWD	12	\$51,679.00	\$28,424.00	\$23,255.00
2023	T350 AWD	12	\$56,045.00	\$30,825.00	\$25,220.00

Great news! We finally received confirmation from DAV National that the 2022 Transit Connect awarded to the Sioux Falls VA Healthcare System at the DAV National Convention is ready to be picked up.

Thank you to Jack Post and John Huntington for doing a great job for our Department!

5. DAV AND AUXILIARY 2023 ANNUAL DEPARTMENT OF SD CONVENTION:

Chapter 1 has approved to use the Chapter Home for the venue to host the *2023 DAV Department and Auxiliary State Convention, May 5th - 6th, 2023.*

Convention booklet advertisement was sent out in the Department October 2022 quarterly newsletter.

A block of rooms has been secured at the Comfort Inn and Suites, 3721 W. Avera Drive, in Sioux Falls. **A cutoff date has been set for April 1st, 2023. Registration Form is attached.**

Raffle sales will take place starting December 1st, 2022. Chapters have all received their initial order of raffle tickets.

Raffle Prizes to Date

- \$1,000.00 DAV AHM Chapter No. 1(2 Prizes of \$500.00)
- \$3,000.00 DAV Rapid City Chapter No. 3 (4 Prizes of \$750.00)
- \$ 100.00 DAV Watertown Chapter No. 6
- \$1,000.00 DAV Northern Hills Chapter No. 11 (2 Prizes of \$500.00)
- \$ 200.00 DAV Swanson – O’Connor Chapter No. 13
- \$ 50.00 DAV Oahe Chapter No. 18
- \$ 500.00 DAV Milbank-Sisseton Chapter No. 19
- \$ 100.00 DAV Brookings Chapter No. 22
- \$ 250.00 DAV Davison County Chapter No. 27
- \$ 100.00 Korean War Display, LLC
- \$ 100.00 Gene Murphy AHM Chapter No. 1
- \$ 100.00 Dick Turnwall Northern Hill Chapter No. 11
- Glarry Acoustic Guitar donated by Connie Johnson Brookings Chapter No. 22
- Vietnam Vets: Still Coming Home Book AHM Chapter No. 1
- Box -Wine, Glasses, Cutting Boards, Cheese, Crackers Gene Murphy AHM No. 1
- Handcrafted Wooden American Flag Dan Francis AHM Chapter No. 1

Chapters need to start looking at **future award submissions and any nominations** for State Officers positions for 2023-2024.

6. 2023 MID-WINTER CONFERENCE: *FEBRUARY 26TH - MARCH 1ST, 2023 (TENTATIVE, PENDING).* All travel to this event will be the responsibility of individual Chapters.

Crystal Gateway Marriott
1700 Richmond Highway (formerly Jefferson Davis Highway)
Arlington, VA 22202
Telephone: 1.800.266.9432 or 1.703.920.3230
Group Name: Disabled American Veterans
\$210 Single/Double

- Agenda Attached

7. 2023 NATIONAL CONVENTION: *AUGUST 5th – 8th, 2023*

All travel to this event will be the responsibility of individual Chapters.

Harrah's Atlantic City
777 Harrah's Blvd.
Atlantic City, NJ 084011
\$149 Single/ Double
Phone: 888-516-2215 (8am-2am EST, 7 days a week)
Group name: DAV 2023 National Convention
Group code: SH07DV3 (*code -- "DAV 2023 National Conv"*)

8. SDDVA ANNUAL BENEFIT SCHOOL

The SDDVA annual benefit school will be held in Sioux Falls September 5th -7th, 2023.

The training will be held at the SD Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell Street).

Lodging has been secured at the Sheraton (1211 N. West Avenue). The Sheraton will be honoring the \$75 state rate. Ask for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs block of rooms. Room block is only open until August 7th, 2023.

If your Chapter wishes to attend, please inquire to Adjutant Pennock and provide him the names of individuals in your chapters that wish to attend. **This information is due by April 1st, 2023.**

9. WINTER COATS

DAV has a healthy supply of coats at the DAV HQ that were donated from Scheels in Sioux Falls. Please let us know if you have a need in your Veteran communities.

10. CHAPTERS FILING FOR NON-PROFIT

South Dakota DAV Chapters are required to be registered as a non-profit corporation with South Dakota Secretary of State. Once registered, Chapters need to renew their status annually. This year's renewal cost is \$20.00 payable only by credit card. Renewal can be made by mailing in the form, but the cost is then \$35.00. The date a Chapter initially registers, sets the date in following years when renewal is due. For example: If Chapter registers in the month of December, their renewal date is 1 December of the following year. Chapters across the state didn't do their initial registration during the same month, so each Chapter's renewal date is unique to that Chapter. The Chapters will need to ensure their annual renewal is accomplished. There is a 60-day grace period after the renewal date. Once the 60-day grace period has expired, a Chapter would be required to make a new initial filing.

Commanders and Adjutants, please send in a copy of your last filing to the DAV HQ by December 23rd, 2022.

11. OTHER INFORMATION:

- Operation Keep the Promise – DAV 2023 Critical Policy Goals
- National Commander’s Awards - **Due February 28th, 2023**
- Memorandum to DAV Department of South Dakota on Membership from National Adjutant Marc Burgess
- DAV – West River Claims Assistance Flyer
- S. 4169 Expanding Veterans’ Options for Long Term Care Act
- AUTO for Veterans Act
- Solid Start Act Enacted into Law
- H.R. 5721, VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research (VIPER) Act
- Widows Tax Repealed In Total
- 2022 Saw Many Legislative Victories for Veterans
- Building a Strong Volunteer Presence in VA Health Care Facilities
- These 5 Things Can Help DAV Assist More Veterans
- How DAV Can Help Employers Attract, Retain Top Talent
- Sioux Falls VA Receives National Award

12. DAV DEPARTMENT BULLETIN DEADLINE: January 2023 BULLETIN: Submittal deadline: December 10th. Email all reports, photos, stories to: adj@davsd.org.

Department Officers, Chapters, Auxiliary State Officers, and Auxiliary Units who wish to place an article in DAV Department of South Dakota Quarterly Bulletin should submit them by the deadline date – stated below. The DAV Department Officers WILL BE RESPONSIBLE for submitting their own articles.

13. DAV DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY BULLETIN & MONTHLY REPORT:

If any of the DAV and Auxiliary members would like to receive the DAV Department Quarterly Bulletin and Monthly Report, please send your e-mail address to DAV Headquarters:

NAME: _____
 PHONE: _____
 E-MAIL: _____

You can either mail or e-mail the information to:
 DAV Headquarters, 1519 W. 51st Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57105
 E-mail: admin@davsd.org



KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO AMERICA'S VETERANS

DAV & AUXILIARY CONVENTION
LODGING AND REGISTRATION

The DAV Department of South Dakota 83rd Annual Department and 71st Auxiliary State Convention will be held May 5-6, 2023, at the DAV Department of South Dakota Headquarters, 1519 W. 51st, Street, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota - (605) 332-6866.

LODGING: The Comfort Inn & Suites, 3721 W. Avera Drive, Sioux Falls, SD 57108, at (605) 275-9577 or (605) 275-9585. YOU MUST MAKE YOUR OWN HOTEL RESERVATIONS!

Rooms have been reserved under the name of DAV. Please mention this when making your reservations - Group Account - 4485675. More rooms can be added if an earlyturnout warrants it. Your reservation MUST BE MADE BY April 1, 2023. The cost of each room is listed on the back of this registration form.

REGISTRATION, LUNCHEON AND BANQUET: Prior to April 1, 2023 - \$80.00 which includes registration fee, two (2) Lunches, one (1) Friday Evening Meal and one (1) Saturday Evening Commander's Banquet. Full registration cost after April 1, 2023 is \$90.00.

No refunds on meals after April 1, 2023 and after this date individual meal tickets will be sold separately. Forget-Me-Not Luncheon is \$20.00, Awards Luncheon is \$25.00, Friday Evening Meal is \$20.00 and Saturday Evening Commander's Banquet is \$35.00. Cutoff date for meals is April 25, 2023. Any special meals must be requested at the time of registration.

Mark you meal selections here:

Forget-Me-Not Luncheon Awards Luncheon
Friday Evening Meal Saturday Evening Banquet

Make registration check payable to: DAV Chapter 1 Convention Fund

Mail registration form and check to: DAV Chapter 1 Convention Committee
1519 W. 51st St
Sioux Falls SD 57105

Name: Chapter/Unit Number:

Address:

City: State: Zip Code:

Phone Number: E-mail Address:

DAV

Group Rates

<u>Room Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Double</u>	<u>Extra</u>	<u>Child</u>
NK1 - 1 King Bed, No Smoking	5/4/23 - 5/4/23	139.00	139.00	10.00	0.00
NK1 - 1 King Bed, No Smoking	5/5/23 - 5/6/23	179.00	179.00	10.00	0.00
NQQ - 2 Queen Beds, No Smoking	5/4/23 - 5/4/23	139.00	139.00	10.00	0.00
NQQ - 2 Queen Beds, No Smoking	5/5/23 - 5/6/23	179.00	179.00	10.00	0.00
NQQ2 - 2 Queen Beds, No Smoking	5/4/23 - 5/4/23	139.00	139.00	10.00	0.00
NQQ2 - 2 Queen Beds, No Smoking	5/5/23 - 5/6/23	179.00	179.00	10.00	0.00
SNK1 - 1 King Bed, No Smoking, Suite	5/4/23 - 5/4/23	149.00	149.00	10.00	0.00
SNK1 - 1 King Bed, No Smoking, Suite	5/5/23 - 5/6/23	189.00	189.00	10.00	0.00

**DAV 2023 Mid-Winter Conference
Commanders and Adjutants Association Meeting
Crystal Gateway Marriott, Arlington, VA
February 26- March 1, 2023**

As of 10/18/22: subject to change

<u>Schedule of Events</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Time</u>
<u>Saturday, 2/25/23</u>		
DAV HQ Office	Alexandria Room	11am-4pm
Registration	Arlington Registration Desk	8am-4pm
<u>Sunday, 2/26/23</u>		
DAV HQ Office	Alexandria Room	9am-4pm
Registration	Arlington Registration Desk	8am-1pm
Business Session	Salons 3-4	9am-12pm
Benefits Protection/ Legislative Workshop	Salons 3-4	1pm-3pm
Membership Workshop	Salons 3-4	3:15pm-4:15pm
<u>Monday, 2/27/23</u>		
DAV HQ Office	Alexandria Room	8am-4pm
Service Workshop	Salons 3-4	9am-10:15am
Voluntary Services Workshop	Salons 3-4	10:30am-11:30am
Inspector General Workshop	Salons 3-4	12:45pm-1:45pm
Employment Workshop	Salons 3-4	2:00pm-3:00pm
Communications Workshop	Salons 3-4	3:15pm-4:15pm
Seminar TBD	Salons 3-4	4:30pm – 5:30pm
<u>Tuesday, 2/28/23</u>		
DAV HQ Office	Alexandria Room	8am-4pm
DAV National Service Foundation	Salon 1-2	9am
DAV Charitable Service Trust	Salon 1-2	Immediately following National Service Foundation
Disabled Veterans Life Memorial Foundation	Salon 1-2	Immediately following Charitable Service Trust
*National Commander Presentation to Joint House & Senate Veterans Affairs Committee	TBD	TBD
National Commanders Reception	TBD	6:30pm-8:30pm
<u>Wednesday, 3/1/23</u>		
DAV National Executive Committee	Salon 3	9am
DAV National Board of Directors	Salon 3	Immediately following Board Meeting

**This meeting may be held outside the Crystal Gateway Marriott, on Capitol Hill*



OPERATION: KEEP THE PROMISE

DAV | 2023

DAV's Critical Policy Goals

- Correct inequities and provide parity in compensation benefits for veterans and survivors
- Implement the PACT Act and address gaps in toxic-exposure benefits
- Ensure equity in VA care, services and benefits for women, LGBTQ+ and minority veterans
- Provide a full spectrum of long-term care options for service-disabled and aging veterans
- Bolster mental health resources to ensure continued progress in reducing veteran suicide
- Expand the VA's capacity to deliver timely, high-quality health care to veterans

DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: keeping our promise to America's veterans. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; providing employment resources to veterans and their families and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a non-profit organization with more than 1 million veteran members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932.



Correct inequities and provide parity in compensation benefits for veterans and survivors

The Department of Veterans Affairs compensation system was designed to offset the loss of earning capacity based on service-related disabilities. However, injured, ill and wounded veterans and survivors face barriers and inequities in maintaining financial security for themselves and their families due to unjust practices, failures to address parity and the negative impact of disabilities on a veteran's quality of life.

Allow receipt of earned compensation and military payments without offsets

The fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act authorized Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay for longevity for military retirees with at least a 50% VA disability rating. In other words, those with a 40% or lower VA disability rating and those forced to medically retire under Chapter 61 have their military retirement pay offset for every dollar of VA disability compensation received. Service members medically retired under Chapter 61 are not allowed to receive both retired pay and VA disability compensation.

Essentially, these veterans are funding their VA compensation for service-related disabilities with part of their retirement pay. These are two separately earned benefits, and any offset between longevity military retired pay and VA compensation is unjust.

- **DAV urges Congress to enact legislation to repeal the inequitable offset between rightfully earned military retired pay and VA disability compensation for all veterans, including medically retired veterans.**

Under current law, veterans are unfairly required to pay back separation pay from the Department of Defense if they later become eligible for VA disability benefits. Separation payments are made to eligible active and reserve service members who have completed at least six years but fewer than 20 years of active service. The lump-sum separation payment is not based on or due to disabilities incurred in service. Withholding a veteran's VA disability compensation due to a nonrelated military separation benefit must end.

- **DAV urges Congress to afford justice for veterans by enacting legislation that allows them to keep military separation payments based on their service, which differs from VA disability compensation.**

Provide parity for survivors receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

Created in 1993, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a benefit paid to surviving spouses of service members who die in the line of duty or of veterans whose death is due to a service-related injury or disease. DIC provides surviving families with the means to maintain some semblance of economic stability after the loss of their loved ones.

The rate of DIC payments has only been minimally adjusted since 1993. In contrast, monthly benefits for survivors of federal civil service retirees are calculated as a percentage of the civil service retiree's Federal Employees Retirement System or Civil Service Retirement System benefits, up to 55%. Currently, DIC payments are approximately 41% of compensation for a 100% service-disabled veteran with a spouse. This difference presents an inequity for survivors of our nation's heroes compared with survivors of federal employees.

- **DAV urges Congress to enact legislation that would index the rate of compensation for DIC payments to 55% of a 100% service-disabled veteran with a spouse to achieve parity with similar compensation federal employees' survivors receive.**

Consider quality of life for compensation payments

In 2007, the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission found that:

- **Current compensation payments do not provide a payment above that required to offset earnings loss. Therefore, there is no current compensation for the impact of disability on the quality of life for most veterans.**
- **While permanent quality of life measures are developed, studied, and implemented, we recommend that compensation payments be increased up to 25 percent with priority to the more seriously disabled.**

Neither the VA nor Congress addressed the quality-of-life measures recommended by the commission. It is clear that over a decade ago, the commission's intent was to increase compensation levels to address the negative impact disabilities have on all veterans' quality of life.

- **DAV urges Congress to enact legislation for a study to address the negative impacts on veterans' quality of life and enact compensation-level increases commensurate with those findings.**



Implement the PACT Act and address gaps in toxic-exposure benefits

The historic passage of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act will provide benefits and health care to millions of veterans exposed to burn pits, radiation, Agent Orange and other toxins. Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs must be vigilant and ensure proper implementation of the law; however, we must recognize that parts of the PACT Act do not address all exposures of veterans at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base (K2) nor provide parity for radiation-exposed veterans.

Monitor the implementation of the PACT Act

Monitoring the implementation of this comprehensive legislation (Public Law 117–168) will be key to ensuring veterans can access their benefits and services. It is imperative that Congress monitors the number of claims filed related to the PACT Act, how these claims affect the overall workload, how many are approved or denied, and why. Understanding how the VA is managing the increase in claims will help Congress to understand where resources are needed. In addition, resources including adequate funding and appropriate staffing must be provided to properly implement the PACT Act.

- **DAV urges Congress to conduct oversight of all disability claims, including those related to the PACT Act and require the VA to provide data on claims granted and denied, quality of exams and processing, and transparency regarding quality assurance.**

Recognize exposures and related diseases at K2

Between 2001 and 2005, more than 15,000 service members deployed to Karshi-Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan in support of military operations into northern Afghanistan following 9/11. Known as K2 or Camp Stronghold Freedom, the former Soviet air base contained residuals of chemical weapons, radioactive depleted uranium and jet fuel, among nearly 400 other chemical compounds. The Department of Defense knew that service members there were exposed to these dangerous toxins, and a 2015 U.S. Army study found that K2 veterans have a 500% greater chance of developing certain cancers.

While the PACT Act includes K2 veterans in the burn pit presumptive diseases, the VA has still not recognized the other toxic exposures and potential diseases unique to K2. Because of these gaps, many veterans will be denied access to life-changing health care and benefits.

- **DAV urges Congress to enact legislation that concedes exposures to radiation, jet fuel and chemical weapons at K2; provides for studies; and recognizes presumptive diseases related thereto. Additionally, K2 veterans should be provided eligibility to health care under toxic exposures, per section 1710, title 38, U.S. Code.**

Ensure parity for radiation-exposed veterans and remove the dose estimate requirement

Under current law, to establish entitlement to VA presumptive diseases due to radiation exposure, the VA requires not only proof of the veteran's on-site participation but also radiation dose estimates from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and then a medical opinion if that dose estimate caused the claimed presumptive disease.

The Department of Justice's Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) program establishes compensation for individuals who contracted specified diseases related to atmospheric nuclear weapons development tests in the American Southwest. The RECA program is available to uranium workers and miners, civilians exposed in downwind areas and veterans. A lump sum is payable to veterans who were on-site participants at the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests.

RECA does not require claimants to prove causation of the diseases related to the radiation exposure, nor does it require dose estimates of exposures. Veterans who were exposed on-site can receive compensation from the government without dose estimates and without proving that the claimed disease is directly caused by the dose estimate of radiation exposure.

The PACT Act does recognize three new locations of radiation risk activities; however, it does not address the inequity between the VA radiation presumptive disease process and the DOJ RECA program.

- **DAV urges Congress to enact legislation to remove the VA dose estimate requirement for radiation exposure. This will provide parity with the governmental RECA program and treat veterans' radiation exposure claims on equal footing with civilians who were not participants but only downwind from nuclear testing.**



Ensure equity in VA care, services and benefits for women, LGBTQ+ and minority veterans

Growth in the number of women, ethnic and racial minority, and LGBTQ+ members serving in the military has created an increasingly diverse veteran population. This diversity has created challenges for the Department of Veterans Affairs—specifically, to ensure equity in services, benefits and health outcomes for all the veterans it serves.

Enhance research and data collection needed for program improvement

Identifying differences in health outcomes among veteran subpopulations requires the VA to collect and analyze data from veterans that has not previously been collected or is not easily aggregated by sex, racial and ethnic minority, or LGBTQ+ status. Veterans themselves are often reluctant to report on these issues for fear of discrimination; however, without such data, the VA is unable to identify or address negative trends that can prevent successful health outcomes and timely access to care.

VA research indicates that there are differences in health outcomes and satisfaction rates among these distinct populations. For example, conditions such as uncontrolled diabetes and hypertension are more common for certain minority groups than white peers. LGBTQ+ veterans report poorer mental and emotional health. The VA also identified significant differences in Hispanic, Asian Pacific/Hawaiian Islanders and LGBTQ+ veterans' perceptions of patient-centered care, access to care and coordination of care, which indicates less satisfaction among these groups than those in control populations.

DAV urges the VA to:

- **Improve methodologies for collecting and analyzing data to ensure health equity among all veterans.**
- **Mandate staff education and training to eliminate disparities in use of evidence-based treatments for certain conditions.**
- **Improve outreach to recruit women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups for VA research projects.**

Ensure diverse representation and culturally sensitive programming

Program offices and federal advisory committees are essential in developing and implementing strategies and programs to meet the unique needs of a diverse veteran population. Peer support is an important way to personalize a veteran's care journey and make treatment more culturally relevant—which in turn increases veterans' engagement and may ultimately aid in their recovery.

DAV urges the VA to:

- **Promote strategies and care plans for meeting the unique needs of women, LGBTQ+ and minority veteran populations through targeted outreach efforts, special programming and the Veterans Experience Office.**
- **Ensure that all veteran subpopulations have representation on federal advisory committees, in the VA's strategic plans and internal programming.**
- **Should be authorized by Congress to use peer support specialists throughout its service lines, with a focus on diversity among peer specialists.**

Ensure access to quality clinical services wherever care is received

The VA is not always able to provide women's gender-specific services at all locations, requiring the VHA to purchase such care from community providers. For this reason, care coordinator programs are essential for women. These services increase awareness about VA benefits, programs and supportive services; help facilitate communication between veterans and providers; and assist with scheduling and administration of specialized services. Care coordinators can help women, LGBTQ+ and minority veterans identify VA resources that may be important to them and serve as navigators to programs that meet their specific needs.

The VA is continuing efforts to hire and train health providers to deliver gender-specific care to women, but staffing shortages continue to challenge the VA's ability to ensure access to knowledgeable providers throughout the system. Women must often use community resources to obtain necessary gender-specific care; therefore, it is critical to ensure community partners' training and cultural competence about veterans is similar to that of VA providers.

DAV urges the VA to:

- **Conduct sensitivity training for front-line staff and create programs to specifically address barriers to care and improve patient satisfaction for women, minority and LGBTQ+ veterans.**
- **Ensure adequate resources for specialized care coordinators.**
- **Mandate certain training and data collection on quality and access for community partners to ensure consistent quality care delivery.**

Improve environment of care

Women, minority or LGBTQ+ veterans who feel threatened or unsafe when seeking VA care are likely to delay or forgo health care treatment, which may lead them to be retraumatized for the very conditions for which they seek help. Separate entryways for women veterans' clinics, strategically placed doors and walls to enhance privacy, appropriate lactation facilities, gender-neutral bathrooms and inclusive signage can help make the VA more inviting for all the veterans it serves.

The VA has also implemented initiatives to address harassment of women, minority and LGBTQ+ veterans at its facilities. Its Stop Harassment campaign has sought pledges to work toward these goals, offered training for staff and bystanders, and created general awareness about the issue throughout the system.

DAV urges the VA to:

- **Continue its Stop Harassment training efforts and White Ribbon campaign to address harassment throughout the system.**
- **Ensure infrastructure and environment of care changes are made that enhance recognition, privacy, safety and dignity for vulnerable veterans.**



Provide a full spectrum of long-term care options for service-disabled and aging veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs program of Geriatric and Extended Care (GEC) includes a broad range of long-term supports and services for aging and disabled veterans. VA's institutional long-term care (LTC) services are provided through 131 VA-operated Community Living Centers (CLCs), 161 VA-supported State Veterans Homes (SVHs) and hundreds of community-based skilled nursing facilities under contract with the VA. In addition, the VA offers a range of noninstitutional support services including home- and community-based services, such as home-based primary care, adult day health care, respite, and homemaker and health aide care, as well as its caregiver support program.

Increase veterans' access to long-term care

Over the next two decades, an aging veteran population, including a growing number of service-disabled veterans with specialized needs, will require long-term care. While the overall veteran population is decreasing, the number of veterans in the oldest age cohorts with the highest use of LTC services is increasing significantly. For example, the number of veterans with disability ratings of 70% or higher, which guarantees mandatory LTC eligibility, and who are at least 85 years old is expected to grow by almost 600%—therefore, costs for LTC services and supports will need to double by 2037 just to maintain current services. In addition, there are tens of thousands of aging veterans with disability ratings of 50% and 60% who need LTC services but do not currently have mandatory eligibility under the law.

- **DAV urges Congress to expand mandatory eligibility for long-term nursing home care to service-connected veterans rated 50% and 60%.**

Modernize and expand VA Community Living Centers and State Veterans Homes

Through its CLCs, SVHs and contracts with community nursing homes, the VA supports approximately 40,000 LTC beds in skilled nursing and domiciliary facilities. Some VA CLCs are able to address specialized care needs of seriously disabled veterans with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries, which most nursing homes in the community are not. In addition, veterans with neurobehavioral issues or who need memory or dementia care are a challenge for all LTC facilities.

- **DAV urges Congress to increase resources for modernization and expansion of VA Community Living Centers and State Veterans Homes to meet specialized needs of seriously disabled veterans.**

Expand home- and community-based care services

In order to meet the exploding demand for long-term care for veterans in the years ahead, Congress must provide the VA resources to significantly expand home- and community-based programming while also modernizing and expanding facilities that provide institutional care. The VA must focus on addressing staffing and infrastructure gaps in order to maintain excellence in skilled nursing care, both for CLCs and SVHs, which will require significant new resources. The VA also needs to expand access nationwide to innovative and cost-effective home- and community-based programs, such as veteran-directed care and medical foster home care. Unfortunately, funding for home- and community-based services in recent

years has not kept pace with population growth, demand for services or inflation. For noninstitutional care to work effectively, these programs must focus on prevention and engage veterans before they have a devastating health crisis that requires more intensive institutional care.

- **DAV urges the VA to expand access to home- and community-based programs, particularly veteran-directed care and medical foster homes.**

Improve the program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

Finally, the VA and Congress must address problems with eligibility criteria for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), a program that is now available to caregivers of veterans from all eras. In 2020, the VA adopted new eligibility regulations concurrent with the expansion of PCAFC to veterans of all eras, which had the adverse impact of making it dramatically harder for veterans and caregivers to be admitted to or remain in PCAFC. Last year, the VA suspended annual reassessments of veterans currently in PCAFC until it could review and revise those regulations to better fulfill the program's intent.

- **DAV urges the VA to revise eligibility rules and strengthen due process rights for veterans and caregivers in the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.**



Bolster mental health resources to ensure continued progress in reducing veteran suicide

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is a recognized leader in suicide prevention and has a full continuum of mental health services that are comprehensive and recovery-oriented, treating issues common among veterans, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders, traumatic brain injuries, depression, anxiety and conditions related to military sexual trauma. The VA also provides wraparound supportive services that allow the department to address care coordination, case management and social determinants such as employment, housing and vocational training to assist the veterans it serves.

Reduce rates of suicide among veterans

In 2020, 6,146 U.S. veterans died by suicide (approximately 17 per day). Compared with 2018, the 2020 age- and sex-adjusted rate of veteran suicide deaths decreased by 9.7% (nearly twice the decrease of nonveterans over those two years). The decrease in the number of veteran suicides for the second year in a row indicates that suicide prevention efforts may, at last, be moving the needle downward in this tragic epidemic. While progress has been made, unfortunately, risk of suicide for veterans is still much higher than other Americans. In 2021, veterans were 57% more likely to die by suicide than their civilian peers, and women veterans were 2.5 times as likely to die by suicide compared with nonveteran adult women.

- **DAV urges Congress to continue to provide additional resources for mental health services, if they are deemed necessary, for VHA to both strengthen and improve its suicide prevention efforts.**

Fund lethal-means safety efforts

Approximately 72% of male veteran suicide deaths and 48% of female veteran suicide deaths are by firearms, with both rates exceeding percentages among the nonveteran population. To address this issue, VHA created a multifaceted campaign in partnership with the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) to highlight lethal-means safety for veterans at risk for self-harm or suicide. While there is still more work to do to reduce the fear among veterans who believe their firearms will be confiscated if they seek mental health help from the VA, this partnership appears to be building trust among the veteran population.

- **DAV urges Congress to appropriately fund the VA's lethal-means safety campaign and support similar programs that show promise in reducing suicide among veterans.**

Improve specialized programs and services critical to preventing suicide

The VA has more than doubled its mental health outpatient visit workload since 2006, with 21.8 million visits used by almost a third (1.8 million) of all VHA patients in 2021. VHA was a leader in establishing integrated primary care and behavioral health programs and universal screenings to assist providers in targeting at-risk veterans and flags for certain high-risk veterans through its predictive analytics REACH-VET (Recovery Engagement and Coordination for Health – Veterans Enhanced Treatment) program.

Increased risk was also found in veterans identified with specific substance use disorders related to opioid, cocaine, cannabis and stimulant use.

However, the VA's most recent annual suicide report indicates that many of the veterans using VHA who die by suicide are those who have not used mental health or substance use disorder services.

- **DAV urges VHA to reevaluate its screening instruments and programming to capture more of the unidentified veterans at risk for suicide and improve treatment options and programs for veterans with substance use disorders.**

Increase staffing levels of VA mental health providers

As many newly established grant programs and benefits, meant to promote suicide prevention for veterans, are implemented, it is vital to ensure that existing programs within VHA remain staffed with well-trained providers using evidence-based practices. The newly enacted PACT Act is predicted to increase demand for health care and mental health services within VHA, and while new mental health hiring authorities are meant to help address increased demand, a 2022 Office of the Inspector General report notes that 73 (out of 139) VA facilities identified severe shortage of psychologists and 71 facilities identified severe shortage of psychiatrists.

- **DAV urges the VA to focus on recruiting and maintaining appropriate staffing levels for mental health services to meet demand and ensure quality services for veterans.**

Improve clinical competence of providers in VA Community Care Network

Unlike VA providers, community providers in the VA Community Care Network are not required to take available training in suicide prevention and competence in lethal-means safety counseling for at-risk veterans. In fact, only a very small percentage of these community providers have completed this evidence-based, lifesaving training. Understanding the veteran experience and common mental health conditions among this population, along with training in evidenced-based treatments, is essential for delivery of quality care and successful health outcomes.

- **DAV urges the VA Community Care Network to require all providers to complete the same suicide prevention training and lethal-means safety counseling mandated for VA providers.**
- **DAV urges Congress to require the VA to include comparable quality metrics in its scheduling system so that veteran patients can make informed decisions when choosing care options.**



Expand the VA's capacity to deliver timely, high-quality health care to veterans

Over the past decade, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has experienced unprecedented growth and stress and undertaken historic reforms to ensure that veterans have timely access to high-quality health care. From the access crises and waiting list scandals of 2014 to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been one consistent trend throughout: an increasing number of veterans turning to the Department of Veterans Affairs for health care. In order for the VA to remain the primary provider of care, it must improve its capacity by addressing staffing needs, an aging infrastructure and challenges with its electronic health record (EHR) modernization efforts.

Reduce vacancies and staffing shortages

As the nation's largest integrated health care delivery system, the VA has workforce challenges that mirror those of the private sector. COVID-19's continuing impact on staffing levels and an increasingly competitive job market have made it difficult to hire needed medical care staff. According to a July 2022 Office of the Inspector General report, VHA has severe shortages of clinical staff at 87% of its 139 medical facilities. Overall VHA vacancies were reported at more than 76,000 at the end of the third quarter of fiscal year 2022.

- **DAV urges the VA to accelerate its recruitment and retention efforts and expedite its hiring and onboarding processes in order to expand its capacity to deliver high-quality health services to our nation's veterans.**

Update aging health care infrastructure

The VA MISSION Act established an Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) process to modernize, realign and rebuild VA health care facilities to meet veterans' demand for care over the next two decades. The VA conducted market assessments to determine demand, capacity and non-VA options for delivering care in each of its regional health care markets. However, VA market assessments were completed before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, raising questions about the reliability of the data used to project the VA's future needs. In June 2022, a bipartisan group of senators expressed a loss of confidence in the AIR process, especially related to rural and urban centers, and the initiative was essentially shut down.

Even as the work of the AIR process is laid aside, it is critical that the VA continue to make necessary investments in its 1,700 health care facilities. According to the VA, while private sector health facilities' median age is about 11 years, VA facilities' median age is 58. Facilities of this era are difficult to renovate, were not designed to accommodate the technological and design innovations that support modern health care delivery, and are not generally environmentally friendly, requiring significant new investments to modernize, streamline and improve safety. In addition, the VA must ensure its facilities are aligned with modern health delivery and address patient care safety, in a manner that preserves veterans' privacy and dignity, while allowing staff to work efficiently and effectively.

- **DAV urges Congress and the VA to create a strategic plan to modernize VA infrastructure and bolster construction funds for health care facilities to increase the VA's internal capacity.**

Modernize information technology and electronic health record modernization

The VA's ongoing transition to a new EHR hit some stumbling blocks in 2021 during its initial rollout and again in 2022, as reports of problems surfaced regarding patient safety. Following a reassessment of its efforts, the VA released a revised national rollout plan to address training and implementation problems. The success of this new EHR system is critical to the future of the entire VA health care system, including truly seamless scheduling and clinical care coordination.

- **DAV urges Congress to provide rigorous oversight of the VA's new electronic health record system, to ensure that patient care, safety and other mission-critical work, including data collection and research, is not negatively affected.**

Expand access to VA care through telehealth

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic complicated the rollout of the VA Community Care Network and altered veterans' use of both the VA and community care. While reliance on and use of VA care has increased, the use of community care has grown faster. In 2022, the VA reported that 35% of all care was being provided in the community.

The need to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 also led to a massive acceleration in the use of telehealth and other virtual modalities, which, if properly used, could continue to expand access to VA health care in the future, especially in rural and remote locations.

- **DAV urges the VA to carefully study the efficacy and effectiveness of virtual health care to determine its optimal use in expanding access to care and to ensure the best health outcomes for veterans.**

Meet VA Fourth Mission for national emergencies

As demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the VA plays a significant role in responding to national health emergencies, which is just one aspect of its Fourth Mission. The VA is also the backup health care system for the Department of Defense and has additional federal responsibilities during national emergencies.

- **DAV urges the VA to maintain sufficient health care capacity to meet its Fourth Mission functions during national emergencies while also ensuring that veterans continue to have uninterrupted and timely access to VA health care.**



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860 Dolwick Drive
Erlanger, KY 41018
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National Commander's 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 February 28, 2023.

- 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)
- Outstanding Local Veterans' Employment Representative
- Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist

Attached is the document for each of the awards providing 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 that 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.


J. Marc Burgess
National Adjutant

JMB:dsb



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 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 to the outstanding performance of a member of the VHA, VBA or NCA. Previous years' candidates may be renominated if they have not formerly won the national award.
- In the event of multiple nominations, departments are requested to submit only their winning nominee in each administration.
- 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 ill and injured 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.

Expenses:

The winners 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 two nights and meals per diem for up to three days will be provided for the winner.

Deadline:

Each nomination, with all supporting material, must be received **no later than Feb. 28, 2023**.

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 natconvawards@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 five nights and meals per diem for up to six days will be provided for the winner and a companion.

Deadline:

All nominations must be received **no later than Feb. 28, 2023**.

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 renominated 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.
- Only one nomination for each award may be submitted by a department or other submitting entity.
- 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 awards ceremonies for department winners and to publicize these activities. The department convention would be an ideal opportunity to present the award.

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.

Expenses:

The winner will be invited to attend the DAV national convention and be presented the award by the national commander. Travel or other related expenses are not covered by DAV.

Deadline:

Each nomination, with all supporting material, must be received **no later than Feb. 28, 2023**.

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 that they have an unwavering commitment and passion to ensure all 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 (1-small, 1-midsize, 1-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 for displaying on their website, along with 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 renominated 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 or other supporting documentation.
- Military service information on the nomination should be completed if applicable (i.e., 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.
- 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 davawards@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.

Expenses:

The employers receiving recognition as DAV Patriot Employer of the Year (1-small, 1-midsize, 1-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. 28, 2023** to be considered for the DAV Patriot Employer of the Year and other special recognition.



2023 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 _____

2023 National Commander's Award Nomination Form, continued

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

Please share with us your company's veteran recruiting and hiring efforts. (If available, we're looking for information like military/veteran recruitment methods, your total number of veteran and disabled veteran employees, and percentage of total employees and new hires with prior military experience.)

Career Building, Retention and Development Efforts

How do you engage veteran employees, build a sense of community in your company and develop a career path for future success? (If available, we're looking for information such as training programs and a veteran-employee-focused career site.)

Community Involvement

What outreach efforts do you participate in to support veterans within the communities where you work? (Do you celebrate Veterans Day in the workplace and with your customers? Do you engage in volunteer or fundraising activities benefiting veterans?)

Additional Information *(optional)*

Is there anything else noteworthy you want to share about how you engage, recruit or promote veterans? Please limit your response to 200 words.

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

2023 National Commander's Award Nomination Form, continued

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 <i>(requires at least one signature if submitted by a DAV representative)</i>		
	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. 28, 2023. 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

DAV Scholarships Program

DAV is seeking nominations for the 2023 DAV Scholarships Program. This program is designed to encourage youth volunteers to become active in 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 davscholarships.org.

Volunteer service is at the heart of DAV's mission to empower veterans to lead high quality and fulfilling lives. From volunteering at VA medical centers to assisting veterans in local communities, DAV and DAV Auxiliary youth volunteers make a real difference in the lives of veterans. Scholarships are awarded to those who carry on DAV's legacy of service and is awarded to youth volunteers who are committed to serving our nation's veterans. Each year, ten scholarships are awarded, totaling \$110,000, 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
- One scholarship of \$10,000
- Two scholarships of \$7,500
- Four scholarships of \$5,000

DAV received 68 applications for the 2022 program year. We cannot thank you enough for your hard work and dedication in nominating these amazing youth volunteers. The top honor was awarded to an applicant who volunteered 345 hours at his local VA medical center and served veterans in his local community by founding and managing an organization that provided PPE to veterans and civilians across the country.

Eligibility:

- Scholarships can be awarded to any volunteer who is age 21 or younger and has volunteered a minimum of 100 hours through DAV's LVAP and/or the VAVS Program.
- Applicants under the VAVS Program must credit their hours to DAV or the 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 before the recipient attains 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 departments, DAV chapters, DAV Auxiliary units, and all DAV and DAV Auxiliary representatives and deputy representatives
 - The youth volunteer or the volunteer's family and friends
- Applications must be submitted with the full consent of the nominee, or the nominee's guardian, authorizing DAV's use of the nominee's name, picture and story for publicity purposes.
- 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 to be considered by the selection committee.
- Applications should be submitted online at davscholarships.org. If the nominator does not have access to enter the submission online, 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 facility's VAVS Program. With regard to LVAP, please solicit recommendations and information from the appropriate DAV state-level department or chapter officials.

Administration:

The national voluntary services director is responsible for facilitating the award process on the national level.

Deadline:

Applications for the 2023 DAV Scholarships Program are being accepted now through Feb. 28, 2023. Any application received after the deadline will be held for the next award year.

Expenses:

The top recipient will be presented 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 winner and a travel companion.

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact our voluntary services staff at volunteerawards@dav.org or 888-480-6786, ext. 3.



John H. Kleindienst
National Voluntary Services Director

JHK:kld



2023 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.

2023 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, 2023. 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 _____



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

National Service & Legislative Headquarters
807 Maine Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20024-2410
tel 202-554-3501
fax 202-554-3581

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. Each of the two (2) winners and their companion will receive round-trip airfare (lowest non-refundable fare), hotel accommodations, and per diem for three days. 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 February 28, 2023.

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 2023 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 February 28, 2023.


J. Marc Burgess
National Adjutant

JMB:dsb



**2023 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: _____

2023 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 28, 2023 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

National Service & Legislative Headquarters
807 Maine Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20024-2410
tel 202-554-3501
fax 202-554-3581

November 17, 2022

Mr. Martin T. Pennock, Adjutant
Department of South Dakota
Disabled American Veterans
1519 W. 51st Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57105

Dear Adjutant Pennock:

At each level, whether it is the National Organization, State Department, Local Chapter, or individual member, we have a remarkable collection of men and women who provide the ultimate example of veterans helping veterans. One of our most successful initiatives is the fundraising efforts supporting state-level programs, and I am delighted to inform you of its continued success.

In accordance with our agreement, the National Organization will deposit \$1,108.00 into the account of the Department of South Dakota on November 18, 2022. This supplemental distribution represents payment of \$.25 per member, over and above the \$3.00 per member required by the program, based upon the Department of South Dakota membership of 4,432 as of July 1, 2021.

With your leadership and careful stewardship of these resources, DAV will continue to empower so many veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity.

National Commander Joe Parsetich and I thank you for all you have done to continue the success of this vital program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Marc Burgess'.

J. Marc Burgess
National Adjutant

JMB:cww

cc: Dan Francis, Commander
Department of South Dakota



KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO
AMERICA'S VETERANS

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will be available to assist ANY veteran to file a VA disability claim or to answer questions:

1st Date: Saturday, 3 December 2022
Time: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Location: DAV Chapter 3
101 E Madison Street, Rapid City, SD

2nd Date: Saturday, 17 December 2022
Time: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Location: Public Library
1040 Harley-Davidson Way, Sturgis, SD

[Contacts at DAV Chapter 3, Rapid City](#)

Christine Speirs	605-787-2645	bizex2@me.com
Dave Meltz	605-430-5883	davemeltz@vastbb.net

[Contacts at DAV Northern Hills, Chapter 11](#)

Dick Turnwall	605-645-7442	dick.turnwall@gmail.com
Peggy Kirk	719-433-1901	peggykirk1953@outlook.com



A JOINT MESSAGE FROM DAV and the DAV Auxiliary

November 4, 2022

S. 4169, Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act

Sen. Jon Tester (Mont.) introduced S. 4169, the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act, legislation that would require the VA to implement a pilot program for assisted living and assess the effectiveness of providing such services to eligible veterans.

Currently, the VA provides home-based primary care services, which is care provided by a qualified care specialist in the veteran's own home. The VA also provides 24-hour care and supervision by skilled nurses and nursing aides at community living centers (CLC) for veterans who can't be cared for at home. However, more support and services are needed for veterans whose required level of care falls between intermittent home-based supportive services and an extended care skilled nursing facility.

Assisted living services can benefit veterans with conditions, such as a moderate traumatic brain injury, who may need help with daily care, but not as much help as a nursing home or CLC provides. Assisted living residents usually live in their own apartments or rooms and share common areas. They have access to supportive services, including up to three meals a day; assistance with personal care; help with medications, housekeeping and laundry; 24-hour on-site staff; and generally some social and recreational activities.

The Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act requires the VA to implement a 3-year pilot program to provide assisted living services in six geographically diverse areas. Veterans who would be eligible to participate are those who are already receiving nursing home level care paid for by the VA, are eligible for such care from the VA, or exceed the requirements for domiciliary care paid for by the VA but do not meet the requirements for nursing home level care paid for by the VA.

This bill would also require the VA to report on the cost of care at each assisted living facility, including an analysis of any cost savings by the VA when compared to the cost of nursing home care, feedback from participants in the pilot program and recommendations on whether the model studied in the pilot program should be continued or adopted throughout the VA.

DAV strongly supports S. 4169, the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act, in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 016, which calls for legislation to improve the VA's program of long-term services and supports for service disabled veterans. We are calling on all DAV members and supporters to contact their Senators and urge them to co-sponsor and support this legislation.

Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

Take Action!



A JOINT MESSAGE FROM DAV and the DAV Auxiliary

November 17, 2022

Contact Your Senators to Pass the AUTO for Veterans Act

On September 29, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3304 as amended, now known as the Advancing Uniform Transportation Opportunities for Veterans Act, or the AUTO for Veterans Act. The bill is now waiting for Senate consideration.

Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized to provide eligible veterans with a one-time grant of approximately \$21,500 to be used to purchase a new or used vehicle. Unfortunately, the average useful life of a modified vehicle is about 11.5 years, and it can cost tens of thousands of dollars to replace it. These substantial costs present a tremendous financial hardship for many disabled veterans who need to replace their primary mode of transportation once it reaches the end of its useful service life.

The AUTO for Veterans Act, as amended, would allow the VA to provide an additional auto allowance to eligible veterans if it has been 25 years since the date of their first auto grant. Additionally, the bill will extend that eligibility to other veterans after 10 years of enactment.

Consistent with DAV Resolution No. 103, we support the AUTO for Veterans Act, as it will establish additional automobile grants for eligible veterans. We are calling on all DAV members and supporters to contact their Senators and urge them to support and vote on this important bill before the end of the 117th Congress.

Please take action today. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

[Take Action!](#)



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Solid Start Act Enacted into Law November 21, 2022

On October 17, the president signed into law S. 1198, the Solid Start Act (Public Law 117-205), which permanently authorizes and expands the Solid Start program, a VA outreach program for veterans in their first year of separation from the military. The law specifically requires the VA to coordinate with the Department of Defense to prioritize outreach to veterans who have accessed mental health resources prior to separation from the Armed Forces.

Transitioning from the military to civilian life can be stressful and navigating the VA health care and benefits systems can be difficult. The Solid Start program has proven to be effective in assisting those separating from service and providing valuable outreach. In fiscal year 2021, the VA's Solid Start reached out to over 32,000 veterans who had mental health treatment prior to separation and successfully contacted over 24,000 transitioning service members.

DAV provided testimony and support for this legislation in accordance with 2021-2022 DAV Res. No. 128, which calls on Congress to monitor and improve services for transitioning service members. To view the **Solid Start Act** (P.L. 117-205), [click here](#).

No action needed.



A JOINT MESSAGE FROM DAV and the DAV Auxiliary

November 14, 2022

H.R. 5721, the VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research (VIPER) Act – URGENT ACTION NEEDED

Today an important bill, H.R. 5721, the VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research (VIPER) Act, will be up for a vote on the House floor. This bipartisan bill is supportive of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) research program and critical to funding veteran specific research. Please contact your Representative today and urge them to approve this important bill.

VA research plays an invaluable role in enabling the VA to identify breakthroughs in medicine and biomedical and rehabilitative technology, and offering its clinicians opportunities to participate in enriched learning environments with scientific peers in academic affiliates. This helps the VA retain its best and brightest clinical providers and preserve collaborative relationships with schools of medicine. The VA's research program is dedicated to exploring veteran-specific questions about risks unique to the veteran population and identifying the most effective ways to treat health conditions related to their military service. VA researchers have also made many important discoveries that benefit all Americans.

H.R. 5721, would exempt the VA from the Paperwork Reduction Act requirements when it enters certain contracts or agreements for research activities. It would also establish the Office of Research and Development within title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the VA maintains its commitment to a robust research endeavor within the department. Most importantly, it would allow some scarce research professionals engaged in mission-critical work to accept compensation from other sources for off-hours work outside of their VA duties.

DAV Resolution No. 430 urges Congress to support the VA's research programs. Please contact your Representative today and urge them to pass this important bill to strengthen the VA's unique research program.

Take Action!

Widows Tax Repealed in Total

A legislative victory in 2019 is fully realized next month.

'Military beneficiaries have to learn to actively participate in the government they protect and defend.'

— *Edith Smith, surviving spouse and MOAA Life Member*

Three years ago, surviving spouses, veteran service organizations, and the entire military community were elated as the Widows Tax was repealed.

Some had been involved in advocacy efforts for decades, making countless phone calls and contending with their fair share of dashed hopes.

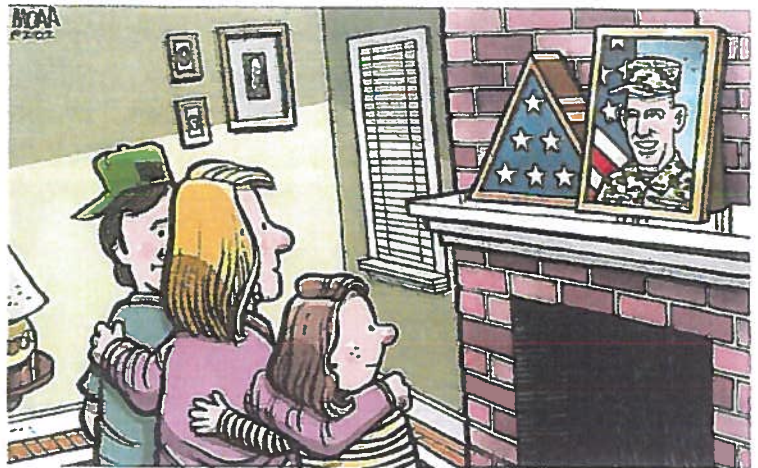
But in 2019, bipartisan support in Congress was at its strongest, advocates unified, and the mantra "Axe the Widows Tax" filled the halls of the Capitol.

President Trump on Dec. 20, 2019, signed the National Defense Authorization Act and with it came a phased-in repeal of the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) offset.

FULL BENEFIT BEGINS

In January, the Widows Tax will be fully repealed, and surviving spouses will begin receiving 100% of both their SBP and DIC benefits.

"I feel relieved. I feel that it's almost hard to believe that it actually got changed," said Kristy DiDomenico, a mother of two daughters, whose husband, Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason



THANKFUL FOR ENDING THE "WIDOWS TAX."

DiDomenico, died in 2018.

Kristy was among the thousands of surviving spouses who mobilized to change this unjust law. Some, like Kristy, made frequent trips to D.C. and shared their stories in the media.

"We all just worked off of each other's energy," she said. "We didn't want to let anybody down."

She heard about the injustice from surviving spouse Edith Smith, a MOAA Life Member and longtime military advocate.

"I'm elated that it's finally coming to pass," Smith said. "I just think it restores the dignity to my husband's service in the Marine Corps and the integrity to the benefits he earned," Smith said.

Kathy Prout, a surviving spouse and MOAA Life Mem-

ber who worked tirelessly for 14 years for this victory, is glad future survivors will never know this was a problem. But she notes there will always be work to do to assist new survivors.

"It's not easy navigating all the DoD procedures ... and grief," she said.

Smith encourages everyone in the military community to use your voice to protect what's earned.

"The offset would not have been repealed without the individual participation of those surviving spouses who were affected," she said. "Military beneficiaries have to learn to actively participate in the government they protect and defend." ❧❧❧

— *By Tony Lombardo, MOAA's director of audience engagement*

2022 saw many legislative victories for veterans

BY MATT SANTISING

NOVEMBER 9, 2022

DAV has blazed the trail in strengthening and protecting veterans' benefits for more than a century. From today's warfighter just stepping off the battlefield to aging heroes with evolving health needs, DAV remains a leader in advocating for wounded, ill and injured veterans.

And 2022 was no exception.

The Honoring Our PACT Act ushers in a new era for veterans dealing with the adverse health effects of toxic substances. For those who served in conflicts after 9/11, the law adds 23 presumptive diseases related to burn pit exposure. It also adds hypertension as a presumptive disease for veterans exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

DAV supported this landmark bill by testifying before Congress. But that wasn't DAV's first time advocating for veterans exposed to burn pits. DAV brought the issue to the public's attention in 2008 after coordinating the release of information obtained in Iraq by Chief Communications and Outreach Officer Dan Clare, who had been activated to military service. DAV initiated a burn pit registry that was the forerunner for the registry implemented by the VA in 2014.

Dating back to mustard gas in World War I, nuclear testing, Agent Orange and other exposures, DAV has long advanced legislation like the PACT Act, which the president signed into law in August.

A pair of bills focusing on breast health for women veterans were also adopted in June. Both the SERVICE Act and MAMMO Act will help improve breast health services and expand mammography screenings at VA facilities, particularly in areas where access to breast imaging is limited.

For student veterans whose education was halted by their school's closure or sudden loss of eligibility, the Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) Act will reinstate their education benefits. It also gives VA the authority to recoup federal dollars from a school that commits fraud.

And for VA health care, veterans can expect more clarity under the VA Electronic Health Record Transparency Act, which will require the department to provide reports to Congress, increasing oversight of this crucial VA program.

We also saw the passage of the Solid Start Act, legislation to permanently authorize and expand the VA's Solid Start program. This bill requires VA to contact veterans during their first year of separation from the military and coordinate with the Department of Defense to prioritize outreach to veterans who have accessed mental health resources prior to separation.

The legislative victories this past year set the stage for DAV to continue pushing our elected leaders to better the lives of America's wounded, ill and injured veterans in 2023.

"We've had a banner year so far in 2022, and we're so thankful our dedicated members sent hundreds of thousands of legislative alerts to their representatives through DAV's Commander's Action Network," said DAV National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. "But now is not the time to let up off the gas. We have a short window to get a few more veterans bills enacted before the end of this year. In January, we will begin a new Congress and we need an active membership ready to hit the ground running."

DAV's goals for the upcoming 118th Congress, which is set to convene the first week of January 2023, include correcting unfair practices for veterans' and survivors' benefits. DAV will also push our elected officials to bolster funding for mental health services to reduce veteran suicide, ensure equity for health care and benefits for women and minority

veterans, expand VA's capacity to deliver quality, timely care and increase long-term care options for disabled and aging veterans.

"This year, we continued laying the groundwork for the care and justice our veterans have earned," said DAV National Commander Joe Parsetich. "In 2023, DAV will build off that success with our unrelenting advocacy. Our veterans deserve nothing less."

You can track updates to other major veteran legislation by joining DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at DAVCAN.org.

Building a strong volunteer presence in VA health care facilities

BY JOHN KLEINDIENST

NOVEMBER 9, 2022

The role of a volunteer inside a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facility is just as important as the role of every doctor or nurse in the building.

It's a bold claim, but I stand by it and research studies support it.

Volunteers balance the clinical nature of medical care with friendliness, compassion and warmth. Anxiety levels in patients come down and quality of life goes up as volunteers provide a touch of home, a feeling of belonging and a bond with the outside world. Getting well matters more when a patient has the desire to live a healthy, fulfilling life, and volunteers are the ones who often instill that desire.

The VA recognizes this and invests significant resources to offer and facilitate the VA Voluntary Services (VAVS) program, giving those who want to volunteer a way to be a part of a patient's care team.

DAV has had a long relationship with the volunteer program going back nearly 80 years. We've served millions of hours inside VA health care facilities in support of patients and are working to contribute millions of hours more. The participation of DAV volunteers is a major part of our effort to keep promises to veterans.

But we can do this only if we know what the VA's needs are and have volunteers ready to help. That's where our DAV representatives and deputies come in. Those members who fill these positions drive DAV success in medical facilities at the local level.

They are liaisons between a VA health care facility and nearby DAV chapters. They attend quarterly advisory committee meetings to understand the needs of their assigned facility. They communicate those needs back to their chapters and encourage and recruit volunteers to help.

An active, motivated DAV representative or deputy can be the difference between a facility having a vibrant volunteer program or one that's barely hanging on. Those selected to fill these positions should understand the responsibility they have and be willing to carry out their work with excellence and dedication. They can be the first impression of DAV with a VA medical facility's staff, and those relationships can drive our level of access at that facility.

There's a place for everyone within DAV to volunteer. Each of us has a gift or skill that can benefit the lives of veterans and their families. Our representatives are the ones who can recognize those volunteers who are well-suited to work in VA medical facilities.

If you are a state voluntary services representative or a department commander making an appointment recommendation for a local representative, please make sure you nominate someone who will embrace the position and grow the program within their area. If you are someone nominated for the position, I ask that you read through our handbook about the position to understand what's being asked of you.

Along with DAV's state and national representatives, the entire national voluntary services department team is available to help in any way we can to make sure local representatives and deputies can run successful programs in their area. Email us at vavs@dav.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you to each one of you who volunteers your time in DAV's name. I know how precious of a resource time is, and for you

to spend some of it impacting the lives of veterans means so much to them and us.

If you are someone looking to volunteer with DAV or are a veteran needing help, visit volunteerforvets.org.

If you are a student volunteer looking for a scholarship opportunity, we give away \$110,000 a year. Visit davscholarships.org to learn more and to apply.

These 5 things can help DAV assist more veterans

BY DOUGLAS WELLS

NOVEMBER 7, 2022

As DAV leaders, it's vital to periodically evaluate performance. In doing so, individuals should ask themselves difficult questions and answer them honestly. One question we should all explore is this: How can we improve our efforts to promote DAV and reach out to prospective members?

While DAV's local leaders do amazing work serving our fellow veterans and families in need, there are always more tools available to reach our fellow veterans.

Here are five things you can do to help DAV assist more veterans:

1. Spread the word when you receive DAV emails sent to you as department and chapter leaders. This strategic communication from DAV is meant to be shared with your members at meetings and through your other communication methods. Membership emails contain important dates and deadlines to sign up for programs to assist veterans. The emails contain specific ways to help fellow veterans through outreach and advocacy. Don't let an email sit in your inbox unread. We're counting on you to spread the word to your local membership and the public.
2. You can now order Recruit A Warrior QR code business cards from the DAV store. A QR code is a barcode image in the general shape of a square people use to go directly to a specific website using their mobile phone's camera. For DAV, this tool allows you to send prospective members directly to a DAV membership

application. The best part is that you instantly get credit for signing up new members. Visit the website <http://dav.la/37z> for step-by-step instructions to order your cards from the DAV store. This is a great way to increase DAV's membership.

3. You can benefit tremendously by accessing hot lists. They are amazingly useful in engaging veterans who are highly likely to be eligible for membership. These ZIP code-specific lists are a great way to do door-to-door campaigns to check on veterans. Ask them if they need help with their VA claims, assistance finding employment or transportation to medical appointments and talk to them about who we are and what we do. Ask them about their service. Are they a veteran newly eligible to file a VA claim due to recognition of new toxic exposure and burn pits presumptive conditions in the PACT Act? Encourage these veterans to file a claim and show them how DAV benefits advocates can assist them. Use the hotlists to make phone calls, send emails, and reach out over social media. Multiple chapters have proven this works to increase membership by putting the work in. Email membership membershippublic@dav.org to request the hot list specific to your chapter today.

4. Get out into the community to tell people about DAV. Fewer COVID-19 restrictions mean it's time to return to festivals, community events and anywhere veterans gather. Get out to county fairs or visit other groups engaging with veterans. Share stories about how DAV benefits advocates can help veterans with their VA claims and how DAV is working hard to lobby Congress to protect veteran's benefits.

5. Talk about the individual and collective victories veterans are experiencing through DAV. Be positive in everything you say and do when you wear DAV apparel. We're all proud to serve our fellow veterans. Let that quiet pride shine through in everything you do.

How DAV can help employers attract, retain top talent

BY ROB LOUGEE

NOVEMBER 7, 2022



Rob Lougee, National Employment Director

In a time when job seekers hold the keys to a changing workforce, employers continue to struggle to find, attract and retain top talent. Unemployment numbers are low, but job vacancies remain high and workers are quitting in exchange for better opportunities.

For America's veterans, the job market is particularly promising. Among veterans of all eras, the unemployment rate was 2.6% as of Oct. 7, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's lower than the rate for nonveterans, which sits at 3.2%.

It's no surprise that veterans are faring well. DAV (Disabled American Veterans) has long known that veterans are the kind of top talent many employers hope to attract. That's because former service members bring unique skills, experiences and training to the civilian workplace. Skills such as leadership, problem-solving, work ethic, adaptability and teamwork are

ingrained in military culture and are invaluable assets to any employer.

Veterans certainly aren't desperate for good jobs, but with approximately 200,000 service members separating from the military every year, they represent an unmistakable opportunity for employers looking for the best of the best—now more than ever.

As a leader in connecting transitioning service members, veterans and their spouses with meaningful employment, DAV can help. For employers, DAV has become an educational resource and critical pipeline for top talent. All of our resources can be found at jobs.dav.org.

Every year, DAV sponsors dozens of job fairs nationwide, both in person and virtually, that are designed specifically for the military-connected community. So far in 2022, DAV has helped 4,083 companies connect with 12,429 separating service members, veterans and their spouses, generating 6,739 offers for job fair attendees.

Employers that demonstrate a commitment to veterans, especially veterans with disabilities, may be eligible for recognition through the DAV Patriot Employer Program. Evaluation criteria includes the strength of the company's veteran recruiting and hiring efforts, retention and career-building initiatives, and company policies toward disabled veteran employees. Patriot Employers receive a digital badge to signal to clients, employees and potential hires that they value America's veterans and what they bring to the workplace. When employers show that commitment, they reap the benefits of another quality common among veterans: loyalty. They also encourage other companies to follow their lead.

As employers navigate today's climate, they must also consider the business advantages of hiring veterans. Numerous financial incentives and other resources are available for employers

hiring veterans and other military-affiliated personnel, including those in the National Guard or Reserve as well as military spouses. The perks range from tax credits and reimbursements to on-the-job training and wage subsidies. Detailed information on incentives and much more can be found in DAV's hiring guide.

DAV is dedicated to ensuring veterans find fulfilling, meaningful careers that honor their service and utilize their military experience. We're also committed to working with employers to access top talent and create a working environment that welcomes veterans. When employers do that, the entire company benefits—from its bottom line and productivity to its culture and employee satisfaction.

As an extension of DAV's commitment to both veterans and employers, the organization unveiled earlier this year DAV Patriot Boot Camp, a robust mentorship and educational program for entrepreneurs in the military-connected community. This program empowers those who served and their families to become innovators and job creators who in turn hire more veterans—a win-win for everyone.

Rob Lougee, a service-connected disabled Army veteran of the Persian Gulf War, was appointed national employment director for the more than 1 million-member DAV in April 2022. Learn more about DAV's resources for veterans at [dav.org](https://dov.org).

Sioux Falls VA Receives **NATIONAL AWARD**

For Most Improved in Outpatient Experience

By: Damian Donahoe, *Patient Experience Officer*

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System is a leader in Patient Experience and has been recognized for acting on opportunities to make things even better for the Veterans they serve. Dr. Timothy Pendergrass, Acting Medical Center Director, traveled to Washington, D.C. to accept the Award for this year's Most Improved in Outpatient Experience at the VA's annual Customer Experience Symposium held on September 7. To win this award, the Sioux Falls VA saw the highest improvement across the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in the overall rating of the primary care provider outpatient experience data in fiscal year 21, improving the primary care score by 10.9%, from 72.6% to 83.5%.

The Sioux Falls VA values the feedback provided by Veterans and their families, and the patients' responses to surveys give key data and insights for improvement. The VHA's Survey of Health Experiences of Patients provides feedback for overall satisfaction, a rating of the provider, the effectiveness of care coordination and communication with the patient, as well as many other aspects of the quality of the patient's interaction with their VA care team. The data from this survey gives clinical leaders, care providers and front-line staff insights into what is going well for patients and where to act so future care reaches the goal of exceptional health care that improves Veterans' health and well-being.



"This award recognizes everyone's effort over the course of a year to improve the experience for our patients," said Dr. Donna Jark, Acting Chief of Staff. "I am very proud of the work done by the entire care team."

Dr. Jark said the dedication and drive of the staff in Sioux Falls, the Outreach Clinic in Wagner and each of the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Aberdeen, Watertown, Dakota Dunes and Spirit Lake, are credited for taking the feedback to heart and acting upon it.

The VA is committed to creating the best possible customer experience. To carry out that commitment, several Sioux Falls Health Care System employees across multiple disciplines participated in learning activities from the annual VA Customer Experience Symposium remotely.



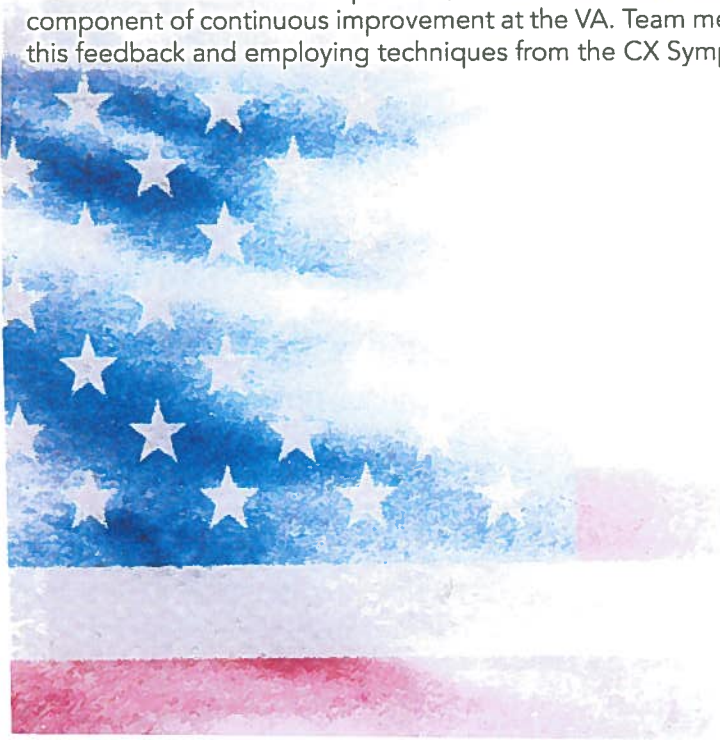
Customer Experience (CX) is the customers' perceptions shaped by the sum of all interactions across their entire VA journey. The theme of this year's event was Make a Difference. Sioux Falls VA team members recognize that every moment working at VA provides the opportunity to improve people's lives.

The CX Symposium confirmed this by bringing forward inspiring stories of empathy, compassion, resilience and innovation happening within VA. Each session connected participants to new initiatives, innovations and leading practices within a variety of fields, including Veteran experience, employee engagement, employee wellness, process improvement, diversity and inclusion, virtual connections and more.



The event celebrated CX excellence across each VA administration and participants exchanged practical information, real-world stories and comprehensive leading practices for delivering exceptional customer experience.

As more Veterans become eligible for VA health care, the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System will adapt to future needs. The feedback from patients, their families and the many stakeholders who support Veterans will remain a key component of continuous improvement at the VA. Team members across the health care system are dedicated to taking this feedback and employing techniques from the CX Symposium to make a difference for Veterans.



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Sioux Falls VA Health Care System

va.gov/sioux-falls-health-care/

**2501 West 22nd Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57105**

**Main phone: 605-336-3230
Mental health clinic: 605-336-3230 x6890**



@VASiouxFalls