

# DEPARTMENT NEWS BULLETIN



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**DAV Commander, *Dr. Charles Edwards***

[commander@davtexas.org](mailto:commander@davtexas.org)

## COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

Thank you for continuing to stand with over 68,000 members of the Department of Texas, Disabled American Veterans as we fulfill promises to the men and women who served. We just completed our 95th National DAV Convention which was held in Atlanta, Georgia. Our Texas delegation was totally involved in every aspect of the proceedings and represented our department in an outstanding manner.

On behalf of our department, I offer congratulations to:

- ★ Mr. Dennis R. Nixon who was elected as our National 1st Jr. Vice Commander
- ★ Mrs. Teresa P. Johniken, elected as President of the Commanders & Adjutants Association
- ★ Mr. Percy Spence, III, elected as the 20th District National Executive Committeeman
- ★ Mr. Tom Parker, elected as the 20th District Alternate National Executive Committeeman

Department of Texas won several awards including the General Jonathan M. Wainwright Award. This award was won by the Department of Texas for the ninth consecutive year for the highest number of new life and full life paid members over goal for membership year ending June 30, 2016.

Ms. Romaine Barnett, NSO in our Houston National Service Office, received the award for recruiting the largest number of new members during our 2015-2016 DAV year.

Additional award recipients were:

- ★ Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative, Mr. Robert Hetzel-Temple, Texas
- ★ Medium Employer of the Year, Michael McCoy, CEO Z Systems-Killeen, Texas
- ★ Small Employer of the Year, Kevin Barber-Veteran Energy-Houston, Texas



I would like to offer my appreciation to Mr. Tim Johniken, Chief of Staff for operating a top rated hospitality room for our delegates during our Department and National Convention.

Likewise, my congratulations to our Line Officers and Appointees for 2016-2017:

- ★ Mr. Robert Squyres, Sr. Vice Commander
- ★ Mr. Robert Delgado 1st Jr. Vice Commander
- ★ Mr. Robert Simmons, 2nd Jr. Vice Commander
- ★ Mr. Nixon, Judge Advocate
- ★ Mr. John Hicks, Chaplain
- ★ Mr. Jay Johnson, Immediate Past Commander

Our Department Appointees for 2016-2017 are:

- ★ Mrs. Teresa Johniken, Adjutant/Treasurer
- ★ Mr. Tim Johniken, Chief of Staff
- ★ Mr. Dennis R. Nixon, Department Inspector
- ★ Mr. Shawn Deabay, Employment Chair
- ★ Mr. Howard Ray, Legislative/BPT
- ★ Mr. Robert Squyres, Membership Chair
- ★ Mr. Jerry Roebuck, Officer of the Day
- ★ Mr. Robert Douglass, Sergeant at Arms
- ★ Mr. Joel Jimenez, Service Commission
- ★ Mr. Jose Garcia, VAVS Chair
- ★ Ms. Jennifer Kellogg, Women Vet Coordinator

In addition, I extend my congratulations to:

- ★ Mr. Craig Johniken, Auxiliary National Sr. Vice Commander
- ★ Mrs. Anita M. Lee, Auxiliary State Commander
- ★ And her elected and appointed officers

Thanks to all the members of the DAVA for your commitment to service and for all of you who serve with pride and honor. Today, you continue to serve with the same enthusiasm and dedication. Hats off and a parade of appreciation for doing your part in assisting our veterans.

Department of Veterans Affairs-Texas Medical Centers & Systems visitation schedule (tentative):

- Amarillo, Texas (VA Health Care System) - September 20, 2016
- Big Spring, Texas (West Texas Health Care System) - September 21, 2016
- El Paso, Texas (El Paso Health Care System) - September 23, 2016
- Kerrville, Texas (Kerrville VA Hospital) - October 13, 2016
- San Antonio, Texas (South Texas Health Care System) - October 14, 2016
- Houston, Texas (VA Medical Center) - January 20, 2017
- Dallas, Texas (North Texas Health Care System) - February 16, 2017

- Bonham, Texas (Sam Rayburn VA Medical Center) - February 17, 2017
- Waco, Texas (Doris Miller VA Medical Center) - March 10, 2017
- Temple, Texas (Central Texas Health Care System) - March 10, 2017

If your chapter is located near one of our VA Medical Centers or Systems, please plan to attend. Contact me or our VAVS Chairman and we will give you more details. Again, we appreciate your membership in our Veterans Service Organization, the Disabled American Veterans. Remember, by recruiting new members will only make our organization stronger, and a stronger DAV means more effective benefits for you and your family. Your membership can and does make a difference. *Thank you for your service* to the U.S. Armed Forces and for your continued support of the Disabled American Veterans.

*God Bless America and God Bless the DAV.*



## DAV Senior Vice Commander/Membership, *Robert Squyres*

[svicecmdr@davtexas.org](mailto:svicecmdr@davtexas.org)

The membership year has begun with a goal of 60,864 members for the fiscal year 2016 – 2017, but, numbers are not the only goal we have in membership.

We must, at all levels, set a goal to recruit more members that will be active and serve our veterans.

Service to veterans and their families is what we were chartered for and it is still what we stand for.

In January we will host a mid-year seminar in Corpus Christi. For more information, visit the Department of Texas website at:

[davtexas/event/mid-year-training](http://davtexas/event/mid-year-training)

The seminar will cover many aspects of membership including:

Materials for chapters to orient new members

- ★ New Member Orientation Webinar Presentation
- ★ New Member Orientation Mentoring Guide
- ★ New Member Orientation Guide
- ★ New Member Orientation Webinar

Materials for chapters to recruit new members.

- ★ Accessing and Utilizing The DAV Membership Application Online Webinar Presentation
- ★ Accessing and Utilizing The DAV Membership Application Online Webinar,



To download the new member orientation docs, visit the link below and login with your DAV Membership number.

<http://dav.org/membership/members/new-members>

I am asking that all chapters set a goal to at least increase their membership by 2 for every 100 members. We really should be able to ask each member to recruit at least one NEW member. Each chapter can go online and get names of veterans in their area.

Young veterans and women veterans are areas we must actively recruit. We need to make it interesting to young veterans and their families. Have dinners, a night at the movies, go to ball games, take older veterans, disabled/handicapped veterans. If there are handicap or older veterans that need a ride to the meetings, take turns picking them up. The list of things and activities we can do is endless, but, we must do them.

One other area we need to improve on is mentoring new members. We recruit members and never make contact with them. They come once and we never hear from them and we never invite them back.

You can go online at the above internet address and get the Orientation and Mentoring guides and be ahead of everyone else at the Mid-Year conference where we will present this information.

The DAV is more than just a monthly time to get out and socialize. It is and must remain a service organization of veterans keeping the promise to other veterans.

I look forward to seeing you at the Mid-Year Seminar in January.

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## DAV 1st Junior Vice Commander, *Robert Delgado*

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[1stjrvicecmdr@davtexas.org](mailto:1stjrvicecmdr@davtexas.org)

To my fellow DAV Members what an honor it is to serve you and to serve this great Department. As you are reading this our National Convention is wrapping up and we will be preparing for our Mid-Winter Conference next year. During our Department Convention, in June, I had the pleasure of spending time with many chapter commanders; and many questions were asked about membership. I wanted to share a program DAV National has established to ensure that our new members understand the DAV mission and who we are.

DAV National has established a Member Orientation Guide and a Mentoring Program. The guide was created to instruct you on the importance of new member orientation. The importance of new member orientation cannot be emphasized enough. I cannot imagine someone joining our ranks and not have any idea of our goals, programs, history or traditions. Do you think they would feel like they belonged? Would they be motivated and committed to help a chapter reach its goals? Well of course not. New members would likely be wondering why they joined DAV at all.

I am not sure how many of our chapters have a member orientation program, but all should. The information presented during orientation provides a foundation for new members and is vital for the new member. It helps them understand how a chapter functions, and what their role will be. It also gives our new members the big picture of their chapter, department and the DAV National Organization.

When new members are properly informed, they are more likely to feel comfortable with the organization and become actively involved in Chapter activities right away. A properly oriented member is also one who is most likely to remain in DAV for years.

To download the new member orientation documents, visit <http://www.dav.org/membership/members/new-members/> and log in with your DAV membership number.

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## **DAVA Adjutant, *Darlene Spence***

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[davatexas20@gmail.com](mailto:davatexas20@gmail.com)

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS – INFORMATION – REMINDERS**

Congratulations to the following DAV Auxiliary National Officers:

- ★ Commander Fran Costa
- ★ Sr. Vice Commander Craig Johniken
- ★ NEC Chris Easley

**ATTENTION UNIT ADJUTANTS:** When submitting listings of new officers and copies of financial reports, remember to mail copies to Adjutant Teresa Johniken at:

**DAV Department of Texas HQ  
1015 Lee Ave.  
Lufkin, TX 75901**

**or fax: 936-637-3283**

Adjutant Johniken will make sure your contact information remains updated in the Department Directory.

Please continue supporting our State Auxiliary, we still have T-shirts in all sizes for purchase!

As your Auxiliary Adjutant, I am available to assist you, don't hesitate to contact me at:

**(210) 322-1910** or **[davatexas20@gmail.com](mailto:davatexas20@gmail.com)**

For a boat load of fantastic DAVA learning experiences and fun to boot, please make arrangements to attend the 2017 Annual State School of Instruction.

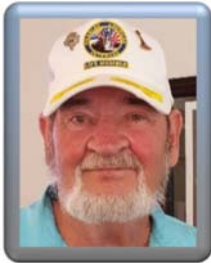
**Dates:** *January 13-15, 2017*

**Venue:** *Omni Corpus Christi Hotel  
900 North Shoreline Boulevard  
Corpus Christi, TX 78401*

**Reservations:** *361-886-3562*

**Room Rates:** *\$105 single/\$120 double*

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## *DAV District II DEC, Tom Archer*

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[decdist2@davtexas.org](mailto:decdist2@davtexas.org)

As we move forward into fall we must reflect on the past months in order to make progress in the future. Many great ideas came from the Department of Texas Convention and the National Convention.

One thing that sticks in my mind is the issue of attracting young veterans to become active in the local chapters. We continually talk about leaving no veterans behind – but if we are committed to leaving no veteran behind then we must take a hard look at our approach to teaching our mission and continually strive to improve our dedication to the veterans we serve.

It requires a movement to continue our mission of service to future generations. We need to attract and prepare them for a position of leadership that we've maintained with vigor. DAV found success over the better part of a century because of our ability to mentor young veterans.

District II of Texas continues to serve with a high level of commitment to not only our members but also the veterans that have served and need our support.

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## DAV Benefits Protection Team Leader, *Howard Ray*

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[legislative@davtexas.org](mailto:legislative@davtexas.org)

More Veterans Eligible for VA Choice Card According to New Changes Implemented by VA

VA News Release – VA Makes Changes to Veterans Choice Program

Changes Remove Barriers and Expands Access to Care

**WASHINGTON** – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a number of changes to make participation in the Veterans Choice Program easier and more convenient for Veterans who need to use it. The move, which streamlines eligibility requirements, follows feedback from Veterans along with organizations working on their behalf.

*"As we implement the Veterans Choice Program, we are learning from our stakeholders what works and what needs to be refined,"* said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. *"It is our goal to do all that we can to remove barriers that separate Veterans from the care they deserve."* To date, more than 400,000 medical appointments have been scheduled since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014.

Under the old policy, a Veteran was eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she met the following criteria:

- ★ Enrolled in VA health care by 8/1/14 or able to enroll as a combat Veteran to be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program;
- ★ Experienced unusual or excessive burden eligibility determined by geographical challenges, environmental factors or a medical condition impacting the Veteran's ability to travel;
- ★ Determined eligible based on the Veteran's current residence being more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.
- ★ Under the updated eligibility requirements, a Veteran is eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she is enrolled in the VA health care system and meets at least one of the following criteria:
- ★ Told by his or her local VA medical facility that they will not be able to schedule an appointment for care within 30 days of the date the Veteran's physician determines he/she needs to be seen or within 30 days of the date the Veteran wishes to be seen if there is no specific date from his or her physician;
- ★ Lives more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care physician;

Needs to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to his/her home;

Faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, a medical condition, the nature or simplicity or frequency of the care needed and whether an attendant is needed. Staff at the Veteran's local VA medical facility will work with him or her to determine if the Veteran is eligible for any of these reasons; or

Lives in a State or Territory without a full-service VA medical facility which includes: Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire (Note: this excludes New Hampshire Veterans who live within 20 miles of the White River Junction VAMC) and the United States Territories (excluding Puerto Rico, which has a full service VA medical facility).

Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program or wanting to know more about it, can call 1-866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA's progress, visit: [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact).



## DAV Women Veterans Coordinator, *Jennifer Kellogg*

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[jennifer.kellogg@va.com](mailto:jennifer.kellogg@va.com)

**MST** is a term used by VA to refer to a sexual assault or sexual harassment that occurred during military service. MST is defined by Title 38 U.S. Code 1720D as "psychological trauma resulting from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the Veteran was serving on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training." Sexual harassment is defined as "repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character."

Why talk about MST in this forum? VA states that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 100 men report having experienced military sexual harassment. So chances are, that if you know four female veterans one of them has been the victim of MST.

This is from the VA Fact Sheet on MST:

### **ARE VETERANS GRANTED DISABILITY COMPENSATION FOR MST?**

Veterans are not granted compensation for the traumatic event itself, but can be granted disability compensation for conditions that result from MST.

### **CAN YOU DEVELOP POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) OR OTHER MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS AS A RESULT OF MST?**

Yes. Exposure to any trauma can potentially result in PTSD or another mental health disorder. PTSD is the most common mental health diagnosis related to experiencing MST.

### **WHAT EVIDENCE CAN SUPPORT A DISABILITY CLAIM FOR PTSD AS A RESULT OF MST?**

Department of Defense forms used in reporting incidents of sexual assault or harassment, as well as investigative reports during military service are direct evidence to support these claims. However, VA knows that events involving sexual trauma are not always officially reported. Therefore, for PTSD claims related to MST VA has relaxed the evidentiary requirements and looks for "markers" (i.e., signs, events, or circumstances) that provide some indication that the traumatic event happened.

These include, but are not limited to:



- ★ Records from law enforcement authorities, rape crisis centers, mental health counseling centers, hospitals, or physicians
- ★ Pregnancy tests or tests for sexually transmitted diseases
- ★ Statements from family members, roommates, fellow Service members, clergy members, or counselors
- ★ Requests for transfer to another military duty assignment
- ★ Deterioration in work performance
- ★ Substance abuse
- ★ Episodes of depression, panic attacks, or anxiety without an identifiable cause
- ★ Unexplained economic or social behavioral changes
- ★ Relationship issues, such as divorce
- ★ Sexual dysfunction

**VA RELAXED THE STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE FOR COMBAT RELATED PTSD. ARE THE STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE FOR MST – RELATED PTSD CLAIMS MORE STRINGENT THAN OTHER PTSD CLAIMS?**

No. In fact, VA relaxed its evidentiary standard for disability claims related to MST in 2002 to ensure all available evidence supporting these claims is considered. Because military service records may lack corroborating evidence that a stressful event occurred, VA regulations make clear that evidence from non-military sources may be used to corroborate the Veteran's account of the MST. Further, when direct evidence of an MST is not available, VA may request a medical opinion to consider a Veteran's account and any "markers" to corroborate the occurrence of the MST event as related to current PTSD symptoms.

**DO I NEED TO BE SERVICE CONNECTED FOR MY CONDITIONS RELATED TO MST TO GET TREATMENT?**

No. VA provides free health care for physical and mental health conditions related to experiences of MST. No documentation of the MST experiences or disability compensation rating is required. Some Veterans may be able to receive this free MST-related health care even if they are not eligible for other VA care.

**HOW CAN YOU APPLY FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION?**

You can apply for disability compensation by completing VA Form 21-526, Veteran's Application for Compensation and/or Pension. You may also apply online at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov), or you can appoint an accredited Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to assist you. Male and female MST coordinators are available at every VA regional office to assist Veterans filing claims related to personal assault or MST. You can call 1-800-827-1000, and VA will put you in touch with an MST coordinator, or you can email the MST coordinator at your local regional office from the list of coordinators located at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/mstcoordinators.asp>. The Texas coordinators are:

*Texas (Houston Regional Benefit Office)*

Tomika Parks - [Tomika.Parks@va.gov](mailto:Tomika.Parks@va.gov) OR Preston Matthews - [Preston.Matthews@va.gov](mailto:Preston.Matthews@va.gov)

*Texas (Waco Regional Benefit Office)*

Algie Watson - [Algie.Watson@va.gov](mailto:Algie.Watson@va.gov) OR Gerald Patterson - [Gerald.G.Patterson@va.gov](mailto:Gerald.G.Patterson@va.gov)

For information about MST-related treatment, visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp).

Thank you for your service.



DAV Chaplain,  
*John Hicks*

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[chaplain@davtexas.org](mailto:chaplain@davtexas.org)

I would like to introduce myself - my name is John Hicks. I am a retired Army Veteran (Sergeant First Class (E7)) of 22 years.

I am currently the Senior Vice Commander of DAV 17 of Universal City. I am married and have three children and two grandchildren and another on the way expected in Nov 2016.

I am grateful to represent you as the Texas Department State Chaplain for 2016/2017. I have been in the ministry since 1992 and as a License Minister. It would be an honor to assist you and your family in any way possible and I will work with the DAVA Department Chaplain if request or needed.

As we approach this Presidential Election I recommend you to voice your opinions and Vote as it is your right that you have fought hard to protect, so I request you exercise your Right to Vote.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. -  
Proverbs 1:7 (NIV).*

As our Motto is Fulfilling Our Promises to the Men and Women Who Served.

So let us not forget the ones that have come before us and paid the ultimate sacrifice or their families that are still here. This applies to the ones that are continuing to serve and have loved ones that are here and need our confronting and us to be with them where they are.

I look forward to the future through eyes of a servant and a fellow veteran. If you need, contact me by phone at (210) 380-8010; by mail at 8054 Coral Meadow, Converse, TX 78109; or email me at [chaplain@davtexas.org](mailto:chaplain@davtexas.org).

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