

**PROCEEDINGS
of
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION**



**August 3–6, 2024
Phoenix, Arizona**

NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS
OF DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE NATIONAL ADJUTANT,
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

TRANSMITTING

2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS OF
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS, PURSUANT TO
36 U.S.C. 50308 AND 44 U.S.C. 1332



January 2, 2025—Referred to the Committee on Veterans'
Affairs and ordered to be printed

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WASHINGTON: 2024

LETTER OF SUBMITTAL

January 2, 2025

Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As business manager of DAV (Disabled American Veterans), and as secretary of its national convention, I hereby certify as to the authenticity of the reports and proceedings of our national convention, held in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, and submit them to you through the office of this organization located in Washington, D.C., to be printed as a House document as originally authorized by 44 U.S.C. 1332 and in fulfillment of 36 U.S.C. 50308.

The national convention proceedings include an independent audit report of all receipts and expenditures as of December 31, 2023, as described in 36 U.S.C. 10101.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry A. Jesinoski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Barry A. Jesinoski
National Adjutant
Chief Executive Officer

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**NATIONAL OFFICERS 2024–2025
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

National Commander

Daniel Contreras, 4702 Halbrent Ave., Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

Senior Vice Commander

Coleman Nee, 1 Leeward Run, South Yarmouth, MA 02664

1st Jr. Vice Commander

John Donovan, 135 N. Woodland Dr, Conway, AR 72032

2nd Jr. Vice Commander

Cynthia Madison, 314 Pebble Creek Drive, Suffolk, VA 23435

3rd Jr. Vice Commander

James A. Procnier, 501 Deep Water Drive SE, Bolivia, NC 28422

4th Jr. Vice Commander

Glenn Hohman, 4330 S Hackberry Drive, Sierra Vista AZ 85650

National Judge Advocate

Michael E. Dobmeier, 404 25th Avenue South,
Grand Forks, ND 58201

National Chaplain

Debra Varner Dancer, 404 Lorain Street, Birmingham, AL 35224

Past National Commander

Nancy G. Espinosa, 1369 Country Park Drive, Kaysville, UT 84037

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2024–2025

First District	Francis F. Whitty, Massachusetts
Second District	Michael Martin, New York
Third District	Joyce Gaddis, Maine
Fourth District	Mark Donberger, Delaware
Fifth District	Leonard M. Johnson, Pennsylvania
Sixth District	Nachee Miller, District of Columbia
Seventh District	Mary Ann Keckler, Florida
Eighth District	Michael Lee Harman III, Tennessee
Ninth District	Leon Booker, Georgia
Tenth District	Ricky Barenbrugge, Michigan
Eleventh District	Dennis F. Hanneman, Ohio
Twelfth District	Alfred C. Reynolds, Illinois
Thirteenth District	Eric D. McGinnis, Indiana
Fourteenth District	Scott Berndt, Minnesota
Fifteenth District	David C. Gerke, Missouri
Sixteenth District	Michael Kerr, California
Seventeenth District	Jerry D. Estes, Utah
Eighteenth District	Donald J. Brown Jr., Hawaii
Nineteenth District	Brigitte G. Marker, Washington
Twentieth District	Paul Shook, Texas
Twenty-first District	VACANT



Daniel Contreras
National Commander
2024–2025
Disabled American Veterans



Nancy G. Espinosa
National Commander
2023–2024
Disabled American Veterans

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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

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Grand Forks, ND 58201

National Chaplain

Debra Varner Dancer, 404 Lorain Street, Birmingham, AL 35224

Past National Commander

Joseph Parsetich, 1801 1st Street South, Great Falls, MT 59405

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2023–2024

First District	Francis F. Whitty, Massachusetts
Second District	Israel Rivera, New York
Third District	Joyce Gaddis, Maine
Fourth District	Johnnie Walker, New Jersey
Fifth District	Leonard M. Johnson, Pennsylvania
Sixth District	John Patterson, Maryland
Seventh District	Mary Ann Keckler, Florida
Eighth District	Dave Sensat, Louisiana
Ninth District	Leon Booker, Georgia
Tenth District	Rolly D. Lee, Michigan
Eleventh District	Dennis F. Hanneman, Ohio
Twelfth District	John Polk, Wisconsin
Thirteenth District	Eric D. McGinnis, Indiana
Fourteenth District	Kevin Grantier, Montana
Fifteenth District	David C. Gerke, Missouri
Sixteenth District	Gerald Wilson, California
Seventeenth District	Jerry D. Estes, Utah
Eighteenth District	Bill Dolan, Nevada
Nineteenth District	Brigitte G. Marker, Washington
Twentieth District	Charles Edwards, Texas
Twenty-first District	Harry O. Komprood, Arkansas

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDERS

1921–22:	Robert S. Marx, Cincinnati, Ohio (deceased 1960)
1922–23:	C. Hamilton Cook, Buffalo, New York (deceased 1935)
1923–24:	James A. McFarland, Dalton, Georgia (deceased 1942)
1924–25:	Frank J. Irwin, New York, New York (deceased 1942)
1925–26:	John W. Mahan, Bozeman, Montana (deceased 1947)
1926–27:	John V. Clinnin, Chicago, Illinois (deceased 1955)
1927–28:	William E. Tate, Atlanta, Georgia (deceased 1949)
1928–29:	Millard W. Rice, Minneapolis, Minnesota (deceased 1980)
1929–30:	William J. Murphy, Santa Ana, California (deceased 1931)
1930–31:	H. H. Weimer, Chicago, Illinois (deceased 1955)
1931–32:	E. Claude Babcock, Washington, D.C. (deceased 1958)
1932–33:	William Conley, Los Angeles, California (deceased 1941)
1933–34:	Joe W. McQueen, Kansas City, Missouri (deceased 1969)
1934–35:	Volney P. Mooney Jr., Los Angeles, California (deceased 1945)
1935–36:	Marvin A. Harlan, El Paso, Texas (deceased 1970)
1936–37:	M. Froome Barbour, Cincinnati, Ohio (deceased 1985)
1937–38:	Maple T. Harl, Denver, Colorado (deceased 1957)
1938–39:	Owen Galvin, Minneapolis, Minnesota (deceased 1956)
1939–40:	Lewis J. Murphy, South Bend, Indiana (deceased 1966)
1940–41:	Vincent E. Schoeck, Detroit, Michigan (deceased 1966)
Aug. 16, 1941–	
Aug. 15, 1943:	Lawrence R. Melton, Dallas, Texas (deceased 1978)
Aug. 15, 1943–	
Sept. 20, 1943:	William J. Dodd, Jersey City, New Jersey (deceased 1957)
1943–44:	James L. Monnahan, Minneapolis, Minnesota (deceased 1980)
1944–45:	Milton D. Cohn, Buffalo, New York (deceased 1968)
1945–46:	Dow V. Walker, Newport, Oregon (deceased 1957)
1946–47:	Lloyd F. Oleson, Ventura, California (deceased 1982)
1947–48:	John L. Golob, Hibbing, Minnesota (deceased 1976)
1948–49:	Jonathon M. Wainwright, San Antonio, Texas (deceased 1953)
1949–50:	David M. Brown, Akron, Ohio (deceased 1982)
1950–51:	Boniface R. Maile, Grosse Pointe, Michigan (deceased 2002)
1951–52:	Ewing W. Mays, Little Rock, Arkansas (deceased 1994)
1952–53:	Floyd L. Ming, Bakersfield, California (deceased 1975)
1953–54:	Howard W. Watts, Indianapolis, Indiana (deceased 1977)
1954–55:	Alfred L. English, Shelbyville, Tennessee (deceased 1987)
1955–56:	Melvin J. Maas, Chevy Chase, Maryland (deceased 1964)
1956–57:	Joseph F. Burke, Bayonne, New Jersey (deceased 1970)
1957–58:	Paul E. Frederick Jr., Cincinnati, Ohio (deceased 2015)
1958–59:	David B. Williams, Boston, Massachusetts (deceased 1994)
1959–60:	Bill H. Fribley, Crestline, Kansas (deceased 1994)
1960–61:	William O. Cooper, Dallas, Texas (deceased 1990)
1961–62:	Francis R. Buono, Whitestone, New York (deceased 1977)
1962–63:	Peter L. Dye, Denver, Colorado (deceased 2013)
1963–64:	Douglas H. McGarrity, Allen Park, Michigan (deceased 1986)
1964–65:	William G. Dwyer, San Diego, California (deceased 1982)
1965–66:	Claude L. Callegary, Baltimore, Maryland (deceased 2014)
1966–67:	John W. Unger Sr., Danville, Illinois (deceased 1970)
1967–68:	Francis J. Beaton, Fargo, North Dakota (deceased 1969)
1968–69:	Wayne L. Sheirbon, Seattle, Washington (deceased 1999)
1969–70:	Raymond P. Neal, Daly City, California (deceased 1980)
1970–71:	Cecil W. Stevenson, Jonesboro, Arkansas (deceased 2013)
1971–72:	Edward T. Conroy, Bowie, Maryland (deceased 1982)
1972–73:	Jack O. Hicks, Larue, Ohio (deceased 2021)
1973–74:	John T. Soave, Detroit, Michigan (deceased 1984)
1974–75:	Walter T. Greaney, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts (deceased 1994)

1975–76: Lyle C. Pearson, North Mankato, Minnesota (deceased 2013)
 1976–77: Frank J. Randazzo, East Meadow, New York (deceased 2010)
 1977–78: Oliver E. Meadows, Godley, Texas (deceased 2005)
 1978–79: Billy O. Hightower, Grand Junction, Colorado (deceased 2015)
 1979–80: Paul L. Thompson, Baltimore, Maryland (deceased 1993)
 1980–81: Stan Pealer, Holts Summit, Missouri (deceased 2018)
 1981–82: Sherman E. Roodzant, Santa Ana, California
 1982–83: Edward G. Galian, New York, New York (deceased 2002)
 1983–84: Dennis A. Joyner, Apollo, Pennsylvania
 1984–85: Chad Colley, Barling, Arkansas (deceased 2021)
 1985–86: Albert H. Linden Jr., Camp Springs, Maryland
 1986–87: Kenneth G. Musselmann, Huntington Beach, California (deceased 2009)
 1987–88: Gene A. Murphy, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
 1988–89: Billy E. Kirby, Clifton, Texas
 1989–90: Vernon V. Cardosi, Saugus, Massachusetts
 1990–91: Joseph E. Andry, Westerville, Ohio (deceased 2010)
 1991–92: Cleveland Jordan, Washington, D.C. (deceased 2019)
 1992–93: Joseph C. Zengerle, Washington, D.C.
 1993–94: Richard E. Marbes, Green Bay, Wisconsin
 1994–95: Donald A. Sioss, Miller Place, New York
 1995–96: Thomas A. McMasters, III, Sterling Hts., Michigan (deceased 2008)
 1996–97: Gregory C. Reed, Indianapolis, Indiana
 1997–98: Harry R. McDonald Jr., Crestview, Florida (deceased 2008)
 1998–99: Andrew A. Kistler, Franklin, Pennsylvania (deceased 2018)
 1999–00: Michael E. Dobmeier, Grand Forks, North Dakota
 2000–01: Armando C. Albarran, San Antonio, Texas
 2001–02: George H. Steese Jr., Fresno, California
 2002–03: Edward R. Heath Sr., Mechanic Falls, Maine (deceased 2005)
 2003–04: Alan W. Bowers, Royalston, Massachusetts
 2004–05: James E. Sursely, Apopka, Florida (deceased 2021)
 2005–06: Paul W. Jackson, Colorado Springs, Colorado
 2006–07: Bradley S. Barton, Tualatin, Oregon
 2007–08: Robert T. Reynolds, Alexandria, Virginia
 2008–09: Raymond E. Dempsey, Des Plaines, Illinois
 2009–10: Roberto Barrera, Del Rio, Texas
 2010–11: Wallace E. Tyson, Fayetteville, North Carolina
 2011–12: Donald L. Samuels, Gallatin, Tennessee
 2012–13: Larry A. Polzin, Sylmar, California (deceased 2020)
 2013–14: Joseph W. Johnston, Williamsburg, Ohio
 2014–15: Ron F. Hope, Clemmons, North Carolina
 2015–16: Moses A. McIntosh Jr., Hephzibah, Georgia
 2016–17: David W. Riley, Semmes, Alabama
 2017–18: Delphine Metcalf-Foster, Vallejo, California
 2018–19: Dennis R. Nixon, China Spring, Texas
 2019–21: Stephen Whitehead, Rosemount, Minnesota
 2021–22: Andrew Marshall, Palm Harbor, Florida
 2022–23: Joseph Parsetich, Great Falls, Montana
 2023–24: Nancy G. Espinosa, Kaysville, Utah

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 102ND NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS HELD AT**

Phoenix, Arizona

August 3, 2024

Joint Opening Session

- - -

The Joint Opening Session of the Disabled American Veterans 102nd National Convention and the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary 101st National Convention convened in the convened in Room West 301B through D of the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on Saturday morning, August 3, 2024, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock, a.m., by National Commander Nancy G. Espinosa.

COMMANDER NANCY G. ESPINOSA: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

(Response of "Good morning.")

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I now call to order the 102nd National Convention of DAV and DAV Auxiliary. (Applause) I'm honored to invite National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski to read the Call to Convention. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT BARRY JESINOSKI: Thank you. The Constitution and Bylaws of DAV, Disabled American Veterans, state that the supreme legislative powers of this organization shall be vested in an annual National Convention, composed of the national officers, and representatives of the state departments and our chapters.

As national adjutant and secretary for this event, I am honored to officially declare the 102nd National Convention of the Disabled American Veterans to be convened in Phoenix, Arizona, at 8:30 a.m., Saturday, August 3, 2024.

Consideration and disposition of business brought before this convention shall be conducted in accordance with the National Constitution and Bylaws now in force. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Please silence your cell phones and other mobile devices. (Three raps of the gavel)

Here to present Colors is the Department of Arizona Color Guard. Members include John McNeil, Johnny Stewart, Nancy Welch, Maria Snyder, Irene Bok, and Carlos Herrera. Present Colors.

(Whereupon, the Department of Arizona Honor Guard presented the national standard.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, from Mesa, Arizona, Jacob Peterson will perform a trumpet solo of the National Anthem. Jacob has been a bugler with Bugles across America for fourteen years honoring veterans in appreciation for their service. Jacob also plays trumpet for the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary band.

(Whereupon, Mr. Peterson advanced to the stage and performed the National Anthem, followed by a round of applause, after which Mr. Peterson withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Jacob, for that truly beautiful performance. Now, please remain standing and join me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by one rap of the gavel.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in thanking the Department of Arizona Color Guard for their wonderful presentation and getting our 102nd National Convention started the right way. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Department of Arizona Color Guard withdrew.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I would like to call on our national chaplain, Debra Varner Dancer, to lead us in prayer, please.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN DEBRA VARNER DANCER: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Almighty Creator, once and again we come to give you thanks. Help us to be reminded to whom much is given, much is required as we remain faithful in our (Inaudible) and our work and all that you've given us this great task to do.

Help us to remember that we walk hand-in-hand with our fellow country, our fellow veterans, and their family. Give us the continuing grace as we invoke your presence here today and throughout this conference that we would be the better and the greater for that. These and all things that we ask in your name. And the people said – Amen.

(Response of “Amen,” after which the chaplain withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, chaplain. (One rap of gavel.) Please be seated. Like another DAV leader you may know, Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego is the second woman in history to hold her office. (Applause)

Elected to her current post in 2018, Mayor Gallego has made honoring local veterans an important part of her job. From recognizing the sacrifices of those who served in the community to helping ensure a \$10.5 million allocation to provide a path of empowerment to homeless or at-risk veterans in the city, she has shown a unique commitment to this community.

Please give a round of applause to Mayor Gallego. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Mayor Gallego advanced to the podium.)

THE HONORABLE KATE GALLEGO: Thank you, Commander. Welcome to Phoenix. We are so honored to have you here today and we're committed to making sure this is a fabulous convention experience.

We are the fifth largest city in the United States and working hard to be one of the most friendly for our veterans. We hope it is a great experience. Whether you arrived at Sky Harbor Airport where our terminals are named for veterans, or if you drove here, we want to be a great city to honor those who made our country so strong.

Arizona is home to many of our finest military installations and a very robust community of veterans. And our city of Phoenix is really powered by veterans, whether it be our police force, which is about a third veterans, or our amazing Veterans Commission which advises us on the work we do to be more and more supportive and friendly to veterans.

Not far from here you can see a wonderful incubator we have to help veterans start businesses. And we have a robust transportation system which we work to get better every day. We are not perfect and we always learn so we recently made some upgrades that were suggested by one of our master sergeants living at the state veterans' home.

He served in the Vietnam War and unfortunately is without three of his limbs. He came up with some designs or some suggestions about how to improve the accessibility of the system and we were able to spend millions of dollars to upgrade it so that he can travel more independently.

We are also home to a very large and strong VA program. I got some personal experience with it. The father of my kiddos served in Iraq and when he came home he had a very injured leg. I got to tell you, I am so thankful for DAV and the work you do.

For those of us who do not serve in the military the language of the VA is a little bit confusing. It's like learning a whole new language for some of us with so many new abbreviations and numbers. So thank you to all veterans who help other veterans navigate the system.

The navigation was tough but his surgeon as incredible. The nurses were so caring and so wanted to support his success. And with help with navigation it's just incredible what we can do to support our veterans.

But I know you are here because we need to continue to do better so thank you for choosing Phoenix. We hope that you have an incredible meeting. Our downtown is full of wonderful restaurants and cultural experiences. We are home to the pizza place, Pizza Bianco, featured on the first edition of Chef's Table. I don't want to get in trouble but some people have said it's among the best pizza in the country. (Laughter) If you're from New York and Chicago, you can boo. (Laughter)

We are also home to the country's largest musical instrument museum if you love music and wonderful sports venues, many of which are not far from here, so we really hope you enjoy our great city. We have more acres of parks than any other city in the country, but I feel like giving our weather right now I don't really recommend a visit immediately. (Laughter) But maybe you can enjoy the beautiful vistas.

Phoenix, again, is just so thankful for you choosing our convention center for this important meeting. And we're committed to doing our part to have, make sure you have an incredible meeting. Thank you to your leadership, commander, and have a great, great convention. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mayor Gallego withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, it's my pleasure to introduce you to our 2024 national convention chair, Ronald Cox. An Army veteran – (Bugle plays) – What was that? Are you guys going to do that every time? I mean I bet if there's an Army bugle – (Bugle plays)

I bet if you're doing it for my branch of service, we're surely going to hear it for the Marine Corps, (Bugle plays) and the United States Navy, (Bugle plays) the Air Force (Bugle plays). I hope you guys don't forget about the Coast Guard (Bugle plays). You guys are so smart, what are you going to do for the Space Force? (Bugle plays Star Trek theme) (Laughter) Very good. Very funny. Let's get back to work.

Ron Cox, past department commander of the Department of Arizona, proudly served our nation during the Vietnam and Cold War eras. He was discharged from the military due to illness in 1982.

Cox has been a member of Chapter 26 in Benson, Arizona, since 1992 and has spent over two decades serving DAV in numerous positions at the chapter and department levels. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Ronald Cox.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the convention chairman advanced to the podium with the bugle playing.)

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN RONALD COX: Thank you, Commander Espinosa, for that very kind introduction. Good morning, DAV and Auxiliary.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN COX: On behalf of the DAV Department of Arizona, welcome to Phoenix.

National Commander Espinosa, National Adjutant Jesinoski, national line officers, Auxiliary National Commander Hurley, Auxiliary National Adjutant Clos, Auxiliary national line officers, distinguished guests and my fellow DAV members.

If I may, I would like to give a special shout-out to my home chapter, DAV Chapter 26, and the amazing Department of Arizona. (Applause) DAV and state Auxiliary members, please stand, if you are able, and be recognized for your contributions. I can't see them.

(Whereupon, the member stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN COX: Thank you. It is an honor to serve as the convention chairperson for the 102nd DAV and DAV Auxiliary National Convention. I am thrilled to welcome you to the Grand Canyon State, home to one of the first national parks in the United States. The red rock walls and turquoise waters of the Grand Canyon actually inspired the architecture of the Phoenix Convention Center.

Although we have a full schedule of activities for the organization we know and love, I hope you have the opportunity to explore some of what makes Phoenix unique – with plenty of water breaks, of course.

With over 50 murals downtown, Phoenix has a walkable arts district which is home to arts galleries, wonderful restaurants, and local shops. There are museums filled with rich cultural history including the Desert Botanical Garden, which has the world's largest collection of desert plants, and the Heard Museum, which is dedicated to the advancement of American Indian art.

Speaking of Native Americans, it is fitting at this time that we pay tribute to those who inhabited these lands for thousands of years. Arizona is home to 22 tribes and nearly 300,000 Native Americans, which is the second-largest of any state. And, as many of you know, Native Americans serve in the military at a higher percentage rate than any ethnic group. (Applause)

To honor my fellow Arizonans who are the original people of our beautiful nation, I am honored to introduce O.J. Mose, a Navaho, whose godfathers served in the United States Marine Corps. He will perform two songs honoring the service and sacrifices of veterans and their families.

First is the "Flag Song" which is considered the national anthem of America's native peoples. The second song will sound familiar to all of you, the "Victories" performance honors resiliency. It is the thanks O.J. and his people hold for all who serve our great nation.

At this time I'd like to ask everyone to please rise. Men, if your headgear is not uniform-related, please remove it at this time. Also, you are invited to salute for the first song. Please welcome O.J. Mose of the Navaho Nation. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Mose advanced to a seat on the stage with his drum and began to play, after which he withdrew from the stage.)

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN COX: Just incredible. Another round of applause (Applause) for Mr. Mose and all of the Native American veterans who served in uniform of our great nation.

As we look ahead over the next four days, I hope you have a chance to connect with fellow members and feel energized for the year ahead.

All of us here hold the same sacred mission close to our heart: to keep the promise to our men and women who served and sacrificed for our great nation. Let's keep that at the top of our mind throughout the convention.

Thank you for your great, tireless work for veterans and their families. I hope you have a wonderful time here in Phoenix.

(Whereupon, the convention chairman withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

MR. JOHN "ROB" LEWIS: And now your DAV Auxiliary staff and national officers: National Auxiliary Adjutant Bunny Clos of Kentucky; (Applause) National Chaplain Aura-Lee Nicodemus of New Hampshire; (Applause)

Judge Advocate Paula Raymond of Illinois; (Applause) Fourth Junior Vice-Commander Carolyn Harris of Alabama; (Applause) Third Junior Vice-Commander Kathleen Wenthe of Louisiana; (Applause) Second Junior Vice-Commander Terry Grabowski of New York; (Applause)

First Junior Vice-Commander Melissa Pierce of Iowa; (Applause) Senior Vice-Commander Christopher Easley of Oklahoma; (Applause) and your DAV Auxiliary National Commander AnnMarie Hurley of Massachusetts. (Applause)

And now your DAV national officers: your Past National Commander and Chairman of the Board, from Great Falls, Montana, Joe Parsetich; (Bugle plays) hailing from Birmingham, Alabama, our National Chaplain Debra Varner Dancer; (Bugle plays)

The pride of Grand Forks, North Dakota, our National Judge Advocate Mike Dobmeier; (Bugle plays) your Fourth Junior Vice-Commander from Bolivia, North Carolina, Jim Procnier; (Bugle plays) your Third Junior Vice-Commander from Portsmouth, Virginia, Cynthia Madison; (Bugle plays)

Your Second Junior Vice-Commander from Conway, Arkansas, John Donovan; (Bugle plays) your First Junior Vice-Commander from Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, Coleman Nee; (Bugle plays) and, finally, welcome to the stage from Sherman Oaks, California, your Senior Vice-Commander, Dan Contreras. (Bugle plays)

(Whereupon, the senior vice-commander advanced to the podium.)

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER DANIEL CONTRERAS: Good morning. (Bugle plays) Army, yes, definitely. Let's hear it. (Cheer) Right on. It is my great honor to introduce my friend and your national commander, Nancy Espinosa. (Applause)

Commander Espinosa is a service-connected disabled veteran of the Army, (Cheers) Reserve and National Guard. (Cheers) She is a proud member of the DAV Department of Utah and Chapter 14 and has served in numerous local, state and national positions.

Last year, Espinosa was elected by DAV members to lead our national organization, becoming just the second woman and the first Latina to do so. (Applause)

Commander Espinosa comes from a long line of military service, a legacy that has continued through her two sons. Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I introduce your national commander, Nancy Espinosa. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the senior vice-commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Dan. (Bugle plays) Good morning and welcome to Phoenix, Arizona. Thank you to everyone who made the trip here.

This week is a unique opportunity for us to come together, from all corners of the country, in service to the same mission. Part of this week is about celebrating you. We celebrate DAV's selfless volunteers, dedicated members, Auxiliary, and generous partners.

Some of you will rightfully receive awards in recognition of your efforts this past year. But make no mistake, everyone in this room makes up the fuel that keeps DAV running strong. (Applause) It certainly kept me going this past year as your national commander.

Over the past 12 months I've had the honor of meeting DAV and Auxiliary members across the country. I've been reminded of how lucky we are to have such devoted, service-minded men and women in our ranks. (Applause)

The pinnacle, for me, was our Mid-Winter Conference. This is where I really got to see our members in action. You went from office to office on Capitol Hill making your voice, our voice, heard loud and clear. You looked lawmakers in the eyes and reminded them of their obligation to America's service members and veterans. You advocated for yourself and others.

When I had the great and somewhat daunting privilege of testifying in front of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I knew all of you were behind me. I felt your support that day. (Applause)

Knowing you had my back I was able to share with legislators part of my own story. I told them some of my personal hardships and how, after serving my country honorably, I struggled to access the care I had earned and needed.

When I separated from the New Mexico National Guard in 1990, I turned to the VA for care. Unfortunately, the VA was ill-equipped to address my health care needs as a woman. And if the VA couldn't provide gender-tailored care, then I didn't trust it could handle my mental health care needs.

Today, I regularly use VA health care and, overall, I'm satisfied with the quality of that care. (Applause) Much has improved since 1990.

But, unfortunately, my experience is not unique. Women veterans have historically been overlooked and underserved in a system quite literally built for men. While significant progress has been made in more recent years, the VA continues to play catch-up to serve the fastest-growing demographic of veterans. (Applause)

That's why, in the days leading up to Mid-Winter, DAV released its third report dedicated to women veterans: Women Veterans: The Journey to Mental Wellness. The report showed us how urgently change is needed and how high the stakes are.

Between 2020 and 2021, the suicide rate among women veterans jumped 24.1 percent. Women Veterans: The Journey to Mental Wellness details the unique risk factors contributing to the staggering increase in suicide among women veterans. The report further shows how the system charged with their mental health care can and must do better.

Take, for example, just one of the gaps identified in the report: "VA's innovative model that uses AI to predict suicide risk and allows providers to intervene earlier has shown promising success." And yet that model does not consider military sexual trauma, something one in three women veterans experience. And it's a known risk factor for suicide. Addressing that glaring gap is just one of 50 recommendations DAV makes in the report.

Importantly, DAV's report included personal stories from women veterans; some of them are here today. They put faces and names to numbers and abstract ideas. They showed all of us why we must do better. They inspired us to fight harder.

Since the report's release, many of you have helped shepherd it into the hands of policy makers and lawmakers. You've hosted roundtables and events and shared the report with your fellow veterans. Some of you have already brought awareness and change within your own communities. Thank you. (Applause)

That kind of grassroots advocacy is the foundation of DAV. We will continue to work with Congress to introduce legislation that addresses the issues laid out in our report. I urge all of you to monitor DAV CAN alerts so you can continue to advocate for your fellow veterans.

I've also been incredibly moved by how DAV continues to change lives, one at a time. I was lucky enough to attend the National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic in Riverside, Iowa, and the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass, Colorado.

I witnessed veterans do things they thought they would never do again. Their joy was palpable, infectious. Of course, I had to join in. (Applause) In Iowa, I summited the rock wall, and in Colorado I flew down a mountainside in a sit-ski. (Applause) It was great fun. (Applause)

I was reminded of the incredible power of adaptive sports. Just as powerful is the community of fellow veterans eager to support their brothers and sisters. It's no wonder that lives are changed and saved at those events.

On a personal level, this past year has changed me. I know that, in part, because so many of you keep reminding me. I'm told I was a quiet fourth junior vice. Well, I'm not quiet any more. (Applause)

After a year as your national commander and having experienced this organization from the ground up I feel more motivated, inspired, and equipped than ever to serve veterans.

While I fully intend to stay involved in national advocacy, I am eager to get back to Utah to help make my own department and chapter the best that they can be. Department of Utah and Chapter 14, I hope you're ready. (Applause)

The same goes for every department and every chapter. We need all of you to bring energy and focus. We need your continued diligence and dedication as DAV expands how it serves veterans and their families.

Last fall, DAV launched DAV Caregivers Support, a no-cost concierge service that provides resources to caregivers of veterans. Everyone in DAV, and we know this is true of our Auxiliary partners, knows someone whose life can be truly renewed through this initiative.

Not only does this create a whole new avenue where we can better the lives of veterans and keep them in their homes longer, it recognizes the service of those who dedicate their lives to the wellbeing of our deserving heroes.

This year DAV also held its first Community Impact Day, a day when volunteers and members across the country spring into action to help veterans in need and raise awareness of veterans' issues.

We even saw the launch of DAV's gaming channel on Twitch, offering a new way of connecting with veterans and bringing our services to them. So, as you can see, DAV continues to evolve in our offerings.

Now, more than ever, we create meaningful experiences and opportunities to support veterans and connect them with our life-changing programs. (Applause)

We must also continue to make sure Congress and VA are keeping the promise to all veterans. (Applause)

Next month, DAV will release another special report. Once again, we are taking aim at toxic exposures. While the PACT Act was a huge victory for veterans across eras, locations, and toxic exposures, too many veterans were left out.

Furthermore, the process of recognizing toxic exposures and establishing presumptive diseases must be overhauled to ensure veterans of future generations don't have to wait decades for benefits and life-saving care. (Applause) So, my fellow DA members, get ready to sound the alarm on that and more.

This week we will elect our next national commander and determine our line for the year ahead. I am confident that you will do for them what you did for me in my term. You will have their back and they will have yours. That's what we do.

I want to thank a few people, in particular, who I relied on during my tenure.

First and foremost, thank you to my family. Without your understanding, patience, and support, I could not have stepped up the way I was called to this year. Special thanks to my sons, Ian, who is a Navy veteran (Bugle plays), and Eric, an Air Force veteran. (Bugle plays)

I'd like to thank my mother, Eleanor Espinosa. She taught me so many of the qualities that make a good service member: resiliency, adaptability, and hard work. She insisted my sister and I be independent and responsible for our own lives. That's how I found myself answering an ad and joining the United States Army Reserves. (Applause)

I also must thank the veterans in my family who came before me and modeled service: my father, World War II Army veteran (Bugle plays) and DAV member Joe Delphino Espinosa; (Applause) my Uncle Benny Chavez, a Korean War Army veteran (Bugle plays) and fellow Chapter 14 member; and, lastly, my Uncle Fred Chavez, a World War II Marine veteran (Bugle plays) and the only reason I'll refrain from making crayon jokes this morning. (Laughter)

It was my Uncle Fred who ultimately kick-started my service with DAV, so I guess Marines do some things right. (Laughter) Sorry, Uncle Fred, I couldn't resist. (Applause)

I also want to thank my chief-of-staff, Department of Wyoming Adjutant Floyd Watson, Jr., (Applause) along with my fellow Utahans and District 17. (Applause)

A big thank you to Adjutant Barry Jesinoski for your example and leadership. (Applause) I'm also grateful for the generous support I received from National Headquarters Executive Director Cody VanBoxel and Washington Headquarters Executive Director Randy Reese. (Applause)

Our team members at both headquarters and across the country are the best of the best. Thank you to everyone who welcomed me and guided me through my tenure.

And, of course, thank you to all of you, not just for what you've done for me and this organization, but what I know you will do. Because of you and all the people I've mentioned, I feel only optimistic about our future. And don't forget, I may not be your national commander after this week, but I'm always your sister-in-arms. (Applause) Thank you. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the senior vice-commander returned to the podium.)

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER CONTRERAS: Commander, your fierce and passionate leadership has been an inspiration to the entire organization. This extends beyond this past year as national commander and throughout your long tenure as a DAV advocate and leader. Thank you for your mentorship, your generosity, and for setting a high bar for leaders to come.

I move to accept the national commander's report. May I have a second?

MR. JERRY ESTES: Yes, Jerry Estes from the Department of Utah, Chapter 14, proudly seconds the motion.

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER CONTRERAS: All in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. The motion carries. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the senior vice-commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: And now let me introduce the governing body of this fine organization, your DAV National Executive Committee. Ladies and gentlemen, please stand and be recognized.

(Whereupon, the members of the DAV National Executive Committee stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: And I ask that the Auxiliary National Executive Committee stand to be recognized.

(Whereupon, the members of the DAV Auxiliary National Executive Committee stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. It now gives me tremendous pleasure to introduce a friend to all our nation's veterans and their family members, Auxiliary National Commander AnnMarie Hurley. (Applause)

An Auxiliary life member for more than 40 years, AnnMarie belongs to Silver Star JFK Memorial Unit 3 in Dorchester, Massachusetts, where she has served as the treasurer since the unit's inception.

AnnMarie's time in the line of succession toward Auxiliary's top position has come after a career spent working as secretary and treasurer for the DAV Department of Massachusetts.

In her time in the Auxiliary she has worked with units to keep them closely focused on our shared mission of making a difference in the lives of disabled veterans and their families.

As Auxiliary national commander, she was a staunch advocate for caregivers, volunteerism and innovation in her organization's efforts to support and bolster the success of DAV. I am proud to call her a trusted friend and leader.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome DAV Auxiliary National Commander AnnMarie Hurley. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the DAV Auxiliary commander advanced to the podium amid a standing ovation.)

AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER ANNMARIE HURLEY: Oh, thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, all. I'm going to do my thanks first so I don't forget. I want to thank each and every one of you for being here today, for your support of the DAV and the Auxiliary, and for all of the work that you do through the year for our veterans and their families. Thank you. (Applause)

And I also want to give high honors to the Department of Massachusetts DAV and Auxiliary, an enormously fantastic group whom I love and I've been with since 1972. (Applause) And thank everyone, again.

I'm happy to be here with you today. I have to say that my time as DAV Auxiliary Commander has had many special and memorable moments. Everything from waiving to people from a parade to representing you in Congress on Capitol Hill.

While many things in this past year stand out in my memory, watching you, the Auxiliary members, the DAV, showing up and supporting our mission to assist disabled veterans and their families is on top of that list.

This year and with our support the DAV started the new Caregivers Support program for friends and family members caring for those who served. Veteran caregivers have access now to no-cost support and an access online resources to assist with their care.

With this program, every veteran caregiver receives a personalized care plan from a trained veteran caregiver specialist. Speaking from many years of experience, this would have reduced stress and depression for both the caregiver and the veteran.

Another popular program is DAV Auxiliary 4 Kids. That's the Number 4, DAV Auxiliary 4 kids. This program is for children between the ages of 3 and high school whose parent or legal guardian is an injured or ill veteran with financial needs.

When these children want to attend a special camp or hope to participate in an extracurricular program and would otherwise not be able to afford to go, the initiative provides up to \$500 a year to help facilitate their dreams. (Applause) Oh, yes. That's been awesome. To date, DAV Auxiliary 4 Kids has supported the dreams of 24 children. (Applause) But let's see if we can double that number in the next year. (Applause)

Another outstanding Auxiliary initiative that's making a difference for people is the Auxiliary Scholarship program. Through this program qualified full-time students may receive up to \$2,500, with part-timers getting up to \$750. I'm ecstatic to say that last year the Auxiliary paid out a total of 17 scholarships with a total amount of \$40,000. (Applause)

Another bright, shining light of the Auxiliary is the Family Assistance Program. You may remember this as the old Service Program, but we saw a need for change, a change for the better, too. Now, the veteran and their spouse or children may ask for help in an emergency financial situation. If you or someone you know could use some help, the application and consent form for this program are on our website.

These programs are great to have in our toolbox, but our most important tool is you, the Auxiliary member.

Last year, our Auxiliary members gave over 148,000 hours of their own time in community service. (Applause) As part of that community service, we drove over 342,000 miles in support of our veterans. And the community service donation amount was just over half-a-million dollars. (Applause)

And our junior members, they clocked in almost 25,000 hours in support of the Auxiliary, as well.

Our members are simply the best around. (Applause) Examples of our members are like John D. Wessinger from Unit 19 in South Carolina and the State Department of South Dakota. Join me in congratulating them on being the 2023-2024 membership incentive winners. (Applause)

Also, last year the Auxiliary had a contest. Anyone signing up five new paid members was entered in the contest. For the winner, well, they had an option of a free trip to either the 2024 National Fall Conference in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, or the 2025 National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. All right? (Applause) Yes, there we go. I'd like to congratulate Katie Conboy of Florida Unit 101 on winning the contest. (Applause)

Now it's time to introduce the 2024 Outstanding Auxiliary Member of the Year.

Each year we recognize the contributions and commitment of our top Auxiliary member. This year the Auxiliary is excited to honor Millie Moseley, commander of Unit 44 in Oklahoma. (Applause)

Millie is a very busy Auxiliary member. Here are just a few of the things that she does for her community: she is in charge of decorations for the unit's Veterans' Day float. And here is a secret about Millie: she makes sure that our Auxiliary banner is just as visible as the DAV's banner. (Laughter) Good for you, Millie. (Applause)

As part of Unit 44's Feed the Vets program, she creates the tickets they use at their events. She also has a special focus for the widows in her community, letting them know what is available for them in the pantry, and that she is also available, at any time, should they need any help or support. She's taken it upon herself to find grief counseling for widows in her community.

And speaking of her community, it's well-known that Millie helps where she is needed. Once, in particular, she spent two hours talking with a veteran who was in crisis. She was concerned for his safety. And after two hours he relented and let her call an ambulance and get to the hospital. Everyone at her chapter knows she saved a life that day. (Applause)

You don't have to be a part of her community to be on the receiving side of Millie's generosity of time. Once time a veteran came into her chapter for help. He recently found out he had terminal cancer and wanted to make his funeral arrangements; specifically, he wanted cremation. After discovering the cost of the service, he knew he couldn't afford it and wondered if they could help him.

Chapter 44 gives emergency grants but must limit those precious funds for families who live in their county, Rogers County. The veteran didn't meet that criteria, but that didn't matter to Millie. (Laughter) She called the funeral home and convinced them to lower the cost to \$700. That was a good start but that still wasn't good enough for Millie.

Next, she found enough local donations to cover the remaining price. She prepaid for the cremation and when the veteran passed she arranged for his ashes to go to Fort Gibson National Cemetery. She said she was there at the beginning and needed to see it through.

The veteran was a total stranger. She saw a need and she took care of it. (Applause)

Other veterans will remember Millie's pug, Jiggy. She trained her dog to be a therapy dog. And Jiggy was a hit with the veterans, so much so that when Jiggy went blind she trained another dog to help veterans with Post Traumatic Stress. The new pup, Emma, is learning everything she needs to do, and with Millie at her side will be a huge help to the local community. (Applause)

I could continue listing reasons why Millie deserves this award, but instead I'll ask you all to please stand with me and honor the 2024 DAV Auxiliary Member of the Year, Miss Millie Moseley. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the Auxiliary Member of the Year to the stage, at which time she was presented with her award and an official photograph was taken.)

MS. MILLIE MOSELEY: Thank you so much. I can't tell you what this – this honored me so much. My life is for the veterans. I grew up in a family of veterans. One of my family members was severely-injured in war so I have seen the price of war.

I will continue to fight for our veterans and I appreciate all of our veterans that are here today. Thank you so much for serving for me. And now I want to say thank you for letting me serve you. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Moseley withdrew from the stage and the Auxiliary commander returned to the podium.)

AUXILIARY COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you, Millie. And thank you, Commander Espinosa, whom I love, for your leadership. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with you through our tremendous year of service and advocacy for the men and women who have served our great nation.

Thank you, again, and may God continue to bless our veterans, their families, the DAV, and the Auxiliary and, as always, God bless America. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the DAV Auxiliary commander withdrew from and the DAV commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Here to deliver a special message from the President of the United States, the Honorable Joe Biden, is Dr. Tahina L. Montoya. Ms. Montoya is an Air Force veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. She currently serves as the senior advisor and director of Veterans Engagement for the White House. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Dr. Montoya advanced to the podium.)

DR. TAHINA L. MONTOYA: Good morning, everyone.

(Response of "Good morning.")

DR. MONTOYA: I'm Tahina Montoya, senior advisor at the White House Office of Public Engagement. And it is a sincere honor to be here with you all at your national convention. I wanted to take a brief moment to share that, like your commander, Ms. Espinosa, I am also a Latina.

I served for over 16 years, 12 of those which were on active duty, during which I deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. And I continue to serve as an Air Force Reservist. (Applause) Thank you. I am also a proud active-duty Navy spouse. And while neither of us are currently affected by disabling injuries, several of our colleagues are.

I know that DAV has played a large role in advocating for a budget that allowed the VA to strengthen the health care system, that you all recommended ways to improve the benefits appeals process, and enhance survivor benefits, and that you also worked with Congress to enact legislation to improve access and health outcomes for women, minorities and other underserved veterans, veterans like me.

I want to extend a personal and heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you. Your sacrifice, your grit, your commitment, your advocacy ensures our brothers and sisters that have been affected by injuries are able to lead quality lives with respect and dignity.

And it gives me a sense of comfort to know that if I become disabled through my service, that the DAV is here to help. But I'm not here to talk about me. I'm here on behalf of President Biden to celebrate your national convention and to recognize the role the DAV plays in the advances this administration has been able to make for veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

The DAV has and continues to play a critical role in the advances made in the veterans' space and it is with great honor that I stand before you to read a letter from the President of the United States. It reads:

"As commander-in-chief I am honored to send my heartfelt greetings to all those attending the Disabled American Veterans 2024 National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.

"American democracy asks us to believe we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Few understand this fundamental truth like each of you do.

"Decade after decade, tour after tour, you risked everything to protect all of us. You committed your lives to defending our shared values.

"And you continue to advocate for the rights and needs of those who bear the costs of having braved the battlefield, as well as all of those who have dedicated their lives to military service. Our nation owes you and your families a debt of gratitude that we can never fully repay.

"I have long said that America has many obligations, but only one truly sacred obligation – to prepare those we send into harm's way and care for them and their loved ones when they come home.

"In just one week we will mark the two-year anniversary of the biggest step we have taken towards fulfilling that obligation in more than 30 years, passing the PACT Act, one of the most significant laws for veterans ever." (Applause)

"The PACT Act has already helped over 900,000 veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during their service get the VA benefits they deserve. And it is set to help millions more.

"The promise we have made wouldn't be possible without your help. Since I took office, I have signed over 30 bipartisan laws supporting veterans and their families, caregivers and survivors.

"We've increased resources to end veteran homelessness. We've expanded job training opportunities. We've hired and trained hundreds of health providers to help veterans and prevent suicide. And to assist veterans experiencing mental health struggles we are recruiting others who understand what they are going through.

"I know there is more work to do, but I have never been more optimistic about the future of this country. And that is no small part thanks to each of you.

"To everyone gathered for this year's DAV National Convention, please accept my best wishes. May God bless you all. And may he protect all those who serve our nation."

Signed, Joe Biden.

Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Dr. Montoya withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: My fellow veterans, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Honorable Denis McDonough. Before coming to the VA, he served as the 26th White House Chief-of-Staff and as Principal Deputy National Security Advisor.

He believes deeply, as he testified to Congress, that "There is no more sacred obligation nor noble undertaking than to uphold our promises to our veterans, whether they came home decades ago or days ago."

Please join me in welcoming a friend to all who have served, the 11th Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Denis McDonough.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Secretary McDonough advanced to the podium amid a standing ovation.)

THE HONORABLE DENIS McDONOUGH: Well, good morning, everybody.

(Response of "Good morning.")

SECRETARY McDONOUGH: It's so great – that was awesome. Thank you. (Laughter) Commander Espinosa, thank you for the kind introduction and for you, your and your family's distinguished service to this awesome nation.

As importantly, thank you for leading with unwavering commitment your more than one million DAV members for the past year. What a great commander, period. Thank you very much. (Applause)

Cody VanBoxel, your National Headquarters Executive Director, AnnMarie Hurley, your Auxiliary National Commander, ma'am, I love hearing your voice.

AUXILIARY COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you.

SECRETARY McDONOUGH: You sound just like my mother. (Laughter) Jim Marszalek, your National Service Director, we just spent some time together back stage. Barry Jesinoski, your National Adjutant, born in God's country, although you now live in Kentucky. (Laughter) No offense but it's not Minnesota, you know what I mean? (Laughter)

And Joy Ilem, your National Legislative Director, now I've said this every time I've been with you, but I repeat it here, Joy is as good as there is. Now, she, like Barry, is a Minnesotan so, yes, I'm a little biased but. She is an unrelenting advocate for veterans, and particularly for her sister veterans. So, Joy, thank you so much. (Applause)

And then we're also all thinking of her teammate, Shane Liermann, today, of course. God bless Shane for his unrelenting dedication to his fellow veterans and DAV members. (Applause)

Now a special word about Randy Reese, your D.C. Executive Director. He's got that nice smile (Laughter) but of course you're not fooled by that any more. (Laughter) And neither am I because he's a tough S.O.B. (Laughter)

And that nice smile covers a steely determination to do right by disabled vets, including when that means he's got to give me the business, if you know what I mean. So, Randy, it's always good to be with you – well, not always good but, you know. You know what I mean. (Laughter)

Now, of course, to each of you, the power of DAV, its members, it's great to see so many of you gathered here today. It's a real honor to be with you and I appreciate the invitation to come back. Thanks for having me here. And thanks for your partnership in serving veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

I've said this before but I'm going to say it again, no one does more for veterans than you. Veterans have no better advocate than you. And VA has no better partner than you.

And here is what I'm thinking about, as the Civil War was ending President Lincoln charged the nation to care for veterans, those who had given so much, had shed so much blood to save our Union.

Nearly eight decades later, the country at war again, drawing on millions of Americans, President Franklin Roosevelt echoed Lincoln, assuring those heroes that the American people would not let them down when the war was won.

Nineteen eight-eight, President-Elect Reagan said that America's debt to you never ends, can never fully be repaid.

And today, as you just heard Tahina say, President Biden calls the commitment of our veterans, our country's one truly sacred obligation, preparing those we send into harm's way and caring for them, caring for you and your families when you come home.

Now, presidents and Americans make that commitment. VA's job is to keep it. And DAV holds us accountable to doing just that. From your members in the most remote chapters, like Commander Sarana Hack up in Fairbanks to Commander Kevin Cooper's post right here in Phoenix, to Washington, D.C., where Commander Espinosa, Randy, Joy, Shane and Jim represent you all to the nation, you hold us accountable to that sacred obligation that the President talks of.

With your powerful advocacy you hold VA accountable, you hold me accountable. And accountability is making sure that VA is caring for you with the kind of conviction, determination, devotion, that you showed when our country needed you most, making sure we at VA are working for you. Just let me repeat that for a second: we, all of us at VA, we work for you.

You may remember that last year in Atlantic City I reported out on that work. I told you that we had a record-setting year. I told you we had delivered more care and more benefits to more vets than ever. And this morning here in Phoenix I can tell you that it's been another record-setting year because rather than expecting you to change your life to fit into VA's programs, we're changing VA to come to you.

That means over 550 in-person clinics this year. That's why I sat down yesterday at CBP headquarters in El Paso, where as many as half of that dedicated agency's agents are veterans, to bring the VA to them. That means connecting with you over email and text, through the media, in person, all in the interest of fitting VA into your life, not the other way around.

So here is a quick public service announcement. For the first time at a DAV convention we've brought our regional office and medical exam units here to you to offer you the opportunity to engage in, maybe even potentially complete, the claims process in a single day.

Our health care team is also on site to assist with enrolling new vets in VA health care and to answer any questions you may have. So the claims clinic is in the expo hall on Level 200 in the West building. And the staff from VHA's vet center is conveniently located in the atrium on the Third Street side.

This central location makes it easy for us and easy for you to access our services. Remember, we work for you everywhere, including here at the Convention, so please come see us before the week is up.

Now, one way we know we have to work harder is by ensuring that we're providing services needed by the fastest growing cohort of veterans, our women veterans. This past year more than 50,000 women vets enrolled in VA health care, our biggest enrollment of women vets in a single year on record. (Applause) I told you your commander had a good year.

Now, here is the good news. The number of women vets using VA services has steadily grown from 413,000 in 2014 to over 630,000 today. Listening to Commander Espinosa and DAV helps us ensure we're doing right by this fastest growing cadre of veterans.

Recently DAV released a crucial mental health wellness report for women veterans, shedding light on the unique challenges facing women veterans. Listening to you we've learned more about the need for tailored mental health services, for addressing the specific needs.

And VA is committed to integrating these insights into our programs, ensuring that every woman vet receives the care and support not only that she deserves, but that she has earned. We're more determined than ever to providing women vets with the highest-quality, most comprehensive care available. And VA is constantly supporting innovations to deliver that.

This includes expansion of research especially focused on suicide prevention in women veterans, as well as broader studies assessing the use of certain psychedelic compounds in conjunction with psychotherapy to treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Military Sexual Trauma, depression. Our efforts extend beyond mental health to encompass a wide range of health care needs.

It includes comprehensive and preventative care for conditions such as osteoporosis, nutrition, heart disease, expands breast care screenings and mammograms for veterans. And it includes gender-specific services including gynecological care, reproductive services and maternity care coordination, which is provided for pregnant vets from eight weeks to one year postpartum.

Look, these initiatives and others are part of our ongoing effort to build trust with our women veterans. We did all of this because we know that access to the entire complement of medically necessary care and resources is vital to the care that we offer veterans. That's working harder and better for vets.

Now, taking that mindset that we work for you, for all vets, means getting claims decisions faster. A decade ago decisions on average took nearly a year. Today, it's less than half that, 155 days. We're faster for a number of reasons, not least because of the workforce. And that workforce means business.

Last year we made nearly 2 million claims decisions for vets. This year we're on track to make more than 2.5 million decisions for vets. (Applause) Month after month for the last five months running they've broken monthly claims production records. And more good news here: you've been filing more claims than ever since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law two years ago, nearly 4.5 million claims so far.

But even with all that, I still believe we're coming up short. Over a million vets have filed claims under PACT. And the grant rate for those is right at 75 percent. But there are over 6 million vets with service that qualifies them for PACT. So there are still millions of eligible vets and survivors who haven't filed, whether for PACT or any other service connection.

We've got to keep reaching out. We have to keep encouraging vets and their survivors to file and when they file to file with accredited veterans service officers, like those here at DAV, not with the claims sharks (Applause) that will take part of their earned benefits.

We will stop at nothing to make sure that every veteran, every family member, every survivor, gets everything they've earned, survivors like Denise Garlington. Denise Garlington's husband, Greg, was a sailor who was badly injured while serving as an operations specialist aboard the U.S.S. Anchorage. The injuries required invasive knee surgeries, ending his military career.

At the time of his injury they had two small children and playing with them used to be the highlight of Greg's day. But chronic pain made life's simple pleasures impossible. He couldn't work. He couldn't play with his kids.

Despite chronic pain, unemployment, immobility, Greg's claim for increased disability compensation was denied. So Greg and Denise reached out to DAV. Tragically, Greg passed away before receiving a decision on that claim. But with DAV's help Denise navigated the complex process and eventually secured a favorable decision from the Board.

Denise's story is a testament to the life-changing difference you make as advocates for your fellow vets and their survivors. And it makes clear that we, together – you at DAV, we at VA – can't stop working until every vet, and in this case every survivor, receives the benefits and services they've earned.

Now on health care we also work for you. Remember, your health outcomes are better when you're with VA. It's the best care, the most affordable care, for veterans.

A quick example. VA's new tele-emergency care, if you are enrolled in VA health care and you are concerned you need to go to the emergency department, you can call your VA health connect (Inaudible) clinical care center. A nurse will immediately work with you to get you timely access to the right care.

That might be VA tele-emergency care. It might be a virtual clinic that day. It might be an appointment with your primary care provider. And if it is an emergency, the VA nurse will call 9-1-1 for you and stay on the line with you until help arrives. This is a new program so just over 45,000 vets have participated in it.

Nearly 60 percent of the vets who called for help had their issue resolved on the phone with a tele-emergency care coordinator. Clinical contact centers are open 24/7. And tele-emergency care will be live in every (Inaudible) this October. This makes it easier for you to get the care you need without having to drive God knows how long to get to a hospital. So faster access to high-quality emergency care built to fit into your life.

It's a commonsense idea, so sensible that you just know it didn't originate in Washington. (Laughter) But you also won't be surprised to know the idea was hatched by a fellow vet, a Marine, a VA employee who knows that we work for you.

Tele-emergency care is about getting all vets timely access to world-class care. And I'm glad to report that more and more vets are enrolling in VA care. Over 9.1 million vets. In just two years since the PACT Act was signed into law 710,000 new veterans have enrolled, a 34 percent increase over the prior two years. (Applause)

Forty-thousand enrolled under the new PACT Act eligibility, eligibility that we expanded years earlier than the law required, at the President's insistence. And more vets once enrolled are using their VA care. Vets will get 127 million health care appointments at VA this year, far surpassing last year's record.

And breaking records is good but it doesn't mean it's good enough. There are still potentially millions more eligible vets who aren't enrolled. So please spread the word. We won't rest until every vet gets the timely access to world-class care that they've earned.

Recognizing we work for you means more benefits and more care to veterans than ever and it means that how we provide that care and those benefits to you is important, too. Right now vets tell us that they trust us more than ever.

In our most recent veterans' satisfaction ratings we earned the highest trust scores since when we started this process in 2016. That trust is built on dedication to those we serve, like Kelly Hoppe – I'm sorry, Holly Hoppe, a DAV chapter service officer in De Pere, Wisconsin, who helped Daniel Diebolt, an Army vet struggling with homelessness and substance use, helped him secure stable housing and his earned benefits.

Daniel had served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He was hard to reach. He needed VA services but wouldn't come to VA, didn't trust us. Then, he lost his unemployment check, attempted suicide. Today, Daniel is still in the same apartment that DAV helped him secure, paying his own rent, encouraging other vets to come to VA and to DAV because you helped us deliver for him.

And that's what this partnership is about, stopping at nothing until Daniel, a combat vet, and all his brothers- and sisters-in-arms, get the benefits, the health care, the services, that they've earned and so richly deserve.

Working hard for you. Making consistent steady progress year-after-year. Delivering at record levels. That's our job. But it's your accomplishment. You played a critical role demanding excellence from VA and keeping our promise to vets.

You've heard this before but let me make sure you hear it from me again, as a result of bringing more vets to VA we've exceeded the most aggressive projections beginning from earlier this year. And that's why now we've told Congress we need more money to keep delivering more care and more benefits to more vets than ever before.

We're projecting we're going to need about \$3 billion more in Fiscal Year 2024, the current fiscal year, for mandatory benefit payments to the nearly 7 million vets who get their monthly benefit checks. And we need it by September 20th so those October 1 checks are not delayed. And next year we'll need an additional \$12 billion for VA health care.

So we're working with Congressional leaders in the Office of Management and Budget to address these needs in a way that allows us to continue to deliver more care and more benefits to more vets, all at record levels. That's what vets deserve and, more importantly, that's what vets have earned. That's what matters most. And we will not stop pushing until every veteran, every family member, every caregiver, every survivor gets those benefits and that care.

So, that's where we are in 2024, providing more care and more benefits to more veterans than ever. And I'm proud of that. But we're not satisfied. And I know you're not satisfied, either.

How could we be satisfied when we still don't have a relationship with as many as half of the veterans in this awesome country? How could we be satisfied when there are millions of vets who qualify under the President's new law, the PACT Act, but who have still not filed a claim?

And how can we be satisfied when we're staring down a monumental public health issue with more than 6,000 veterans a year dying by suicide because they've become convinced that they're a burden on this country, the country that they've done so much to strengthen and the country that still so badly needs them?

How could we be satisfied until every veteran in crisis knows that there is hope, that help is available, that treatment works, and that suicide is preventable? So, no, we're not satisfied. We are not satisfied. And that, more than anything, is the reason I came back to see you again this year, to hold myself, to hold all my teammates at VA, accountable to you.

God bless you all. God bless our nation's service members and our veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. Thank you all very much. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Secretary McDonough withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Secretary McDonough. Your commitment to providing the highest level of support possible for those who have borne the cost of battle is exemplary. DAV is proud to support you in this effort.

DAV is proud of the work we do to assist veterans who need help accessing the VA care they've earned. And perhaps no place is better to see that support in action than in the fleet of volunteer-driven vehicles we call the DAV Transportation Network.

While we're all familiar with this incredible program, it's almost impossible to fully comprehend just how important this program is to the veterans who count on us. Every day hundreds of volunteers across the nation are busy ensuring promises are kept to disabled veterans by providing no-cost transportation to and from VA medical appointments.

Working together, hospital service coordinators and volunteers help to ensure that geography is no obstacle to world-class health care. Through these selfless efforts hundreds of thousands of ill and injured veterans receive the care they have earned every year, and without this resource, sadly, we know many veterans would have to go without.

It's mindboggling that since 1987, DAV headquarters, chapters, departments, the National Service Foundation, and the Columbia Trust have purchased 3,763 vehicles at a cost of more than \$90 million. This is an investment for which each and every one of us should all be very proud.

Last year, DAV volunteer drivers spent 575,000 hours logging more than 9.2 million miles providing no-cost rides for veterans to VA medical facilities.

The histories of our organizations are intertwined. The relationship dates back more than 100 years to a donation of vehicles by Henry Ford to help our founding World War I veterans get to their second national convention.

Now, it's my pleasure to bring to the stage from the Ford Motor Company Scott Rumfield. (Whereupon, "Ford Truck Man" played as Mr. Rumfield advanced to the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Representing Ford today is Scott Rumfield, Ford pro salesforce product line manager. A proud Air Force veteran, Scott served for 11 years and is the Chairman of Ford's veteran network group. (Bugle plays)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Mr. Rumfield advanced to the podium.)

MR. SCOTT RUMFIELD: Never gets old. (Laughter) Thank you, National Commander Espinosa. And National Adjutant Jesinoski – Jesinoski. I am very cognizant of trying to get names right as somebody that always has their name screwed up so I apologize for that. (Laughter) I try to make sure I get it right.

I'm truly honored to be here with both of you and all of you longtime supporters, members, and staff of the DAV. Again, my name is Scott Rumfield and I am a product line manager for salesforce at Ford Motor Company and the chair of our veterans' employee resource group.

This is actually my second opportunity to attend the DAV national convention since I joined Ford Motor Company. I have been fortunate to spend almost ten years at Ford and could not be more excited to be part of the 100-year partnership that has been built between the DAV and Ford Motor Company.

I served 11 years in the United States Air Force. (Bugle plays) And I served – during that time, for the first three years I was an aircraft maintainer. I worked on F-111s and F-16s weapons systems and kept them in operational condition. This hands-on experience gave me a deep understanding of the intricate workings of electronics and these airframes.

I then transitioned over to intelligence analysis, spent the next eight years honing my skills at all levels. I started at the tactical intelligence level, worked directly with F-16 and F-15 pilots, supporting their missions through mission planning, threat identification and education, and route and target planning.

My career culminated in leading strategic intelligence collection efforts in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom, ensuring our forces has all the information they needed to succeed in the air war. This diverse experience shaped my analytical abilities and instilled in me a strong sense of duty and dedication.

I have been incredibly impressed by the work that the DAV does day-in and day-out to ensure the promises are kept to our veterans and their families. From providing thousands of rides to medical appointments each year to filing claims for benefits, and for consistently advocating for the rights of our service men and women. Your work is so very important.

So I'm here on behalf of Ford Philanthropy, which is the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company. And we cannot think of a better partner to collaborate with to evolve our relationship around transportation access.

The world is in the midst of a transformation in the auto industry, including emerging new technologies, electrification, and autonomy; but it is important to view these as opportunities. Opportunities for us to innovate and collaborate together to solidify the next 100 years of impact, service, and partnership.

Ford believes in the freedom of movement for all, which is the same service that you bring to our veterans.

On behalf of the more than 87,000 Ford employees across the United States, I want to thank you for your service, your sacrifice, and your continued support of our nation's heroes and their families. I also want to thank you, the members of the DAV, for supporting Ford.

We know when military families and veterans buy new vehicles, they prefer Ford trucks, utilities and cars over any other brand. I may be biased. (Laughter) Our partnership not only amplifies the service

you provide to veterans but provides savings to you as members. Our Ford X Partner Plan Recognition Program is just a small way we can say thank you for all that you do.

And our 100-year partnership is unique. The fact that this has been built on trust, collaboration, and service that started with Henry Ford when he donated 50 Model T's to DAV members to attend the second national DAV convention is truly special. And that partnership continues through today.

Together, Ford and DAV have made an incredible impact in supporting our veterans over the past century; and we look forward to leveraging collaboration, innovation, and mobility solutions as we chart the next 100 years.

Ensuring veterans have access to transportation for medical care and other fundamental needs means so much to us and embodies who we are as a company, the idea of freedom of movement, and provides so much for our veterans and our service people.

For more than a quarter century Ford has supported the DAV Transportation Network. And we are proud to have donated a total of 264 vehicles across all 50 states. (Applause)

And today I am proud to announce we are donating five new Ford Explorers for five VA medical centers across the country. (Applause)

Ford and Ford Philanthropy is proud to continue to support the DAV. The Transportation Network continues to fill a substantial need, delivers a powerful impact on local communities, and proves to have great value.

This year's Ford Explorer donation recipients are North Las Vegas, Nevada; (Applause) Cheyenne, Wyoming; (Applause) Boise, Idaho; (Applause) Marion, Indiana; (Applause) and White River, Vermont. (Applause)

I'd now like to ask National Commander Espinosa and National Adjutant and CEO Jesinoski – I'm trying. I'm sorry – and my colleague Raymond Allbright who is back stage, to please join me on stage.

(Whereupon, the commander, adjutant, and Mr. Allbright joined Mr. Rumfield, at which time an official photograph was taken with a ceremonial check, after which the commander and adjutant returned to their seats.)

MR. RUMFIELD: Thank you both for joining me up here and throughout our partnership journey. On behalf of every Ford Motor Company employee I'd like to present you with this ceremonial check which represents the value of our donations and commitment to increasing transportation access.

Again, I want to personally thank all of you for your bravery, your loyalty and your service, and your continued service to our veterans. We know our freedom depends on it. Please enjoy the rest of the convention. Thank you for having me here. It's truly been an honor. Have a great day. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Rumfield and Mr. Allbright withdrew from stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you both for joining us. Our Transportation Network isn't the only way DAV showcases its voluntary strength. In countless communities across the nation each and every day patriotic Americans give freely of their most precious resource – their time – in order to better the lives of veterans. And this generosity isn't limited to adults.

DAV scholarships help to both teach young men and women about the importance of service and reward their efforts on behalf of disabled veterans.

DAV is honored to provide an incentive to these young men and women. DAV scholarships encourage volunteerism and connect future leaders with veterans, building a lifelong bond to our cause and the heroes we represent.

Now, let's get to know one of these young leaders, this year's top recipient.

(Whereupon, the video "Scholarship Winner" was viewed.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: DAV National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst, please join me on stage. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Kleindienst joined the commander on the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: And now, it's my extreme pleasure to introduce our top scholarship recipient, Amelia Marcum, of Denver, Colorado. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Ms. Marcum joined the Mr. Kleindienst and the commander for the presentation.)

MR. LEWIS: Amelia Marcum is a 2021 graduate of Regis Jesuit High School in Aurora, Colorado, and will soon enter her senior year at Stanford University in California. She is a direct descendant of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians in North Dakota.

In the spring and summer of 2020, under the guidance of then-North Dakota State Senator Richard Marcellais, she developed and wrote a Native American veteran resource guide that's now used by the state's five tribal veterans resource service centers.

(Whereupon, Mr. Kleindienst and Ms. Marcum were joined by the adjutant and the commander at which time an official photograph was taken, after which the adjutant and commander returned to their seats and Ms. Marcum advanced to the podium.)

MS. AMELIA MARCUM: Good morning. Taanishi. Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Disabled American Veterans, distinguished guests, and, most importantly, our outstanding veterans, I am honored to be with you today. (Applause) Thank you to DAV for hosting me here and providing me with this truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I am forever grateful.

My name is Amelia Randall Marcum or Kamamak Bii-Bii – Butterfly Baby in my native Michif language. It is truly an honor to stand before such a remarkable group of individuals. Your bravery, courage, and service to our country is truly heroic and inspiring. Meeting and personally engaging with you at this convention is a moment that I will cherish.

First and foremost, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to my family. A big thank you to my mom and grandma, who I'm so excited to have join me today, for their invaluable support as I researched and developed the North Dakota Native Veterans Resource Guide. (Applause) They spent countless hours reviewing, proofing, and helping me format the guide to ensure that it was accessible.

I also want to thank my dad, Brendan, my Aunt Suzy, and my friends who have been my pillars of support. And a special thank you to Senator Richard Marcellais, whose unwavering dedication to serving our great nation and continuous guidance throughout my internship has been inspiring. His work and commitment have made our world a better place and he is my personal motivation.

And to all of you, this awesome veterans' community, thank you for your support as I pursued my passion of volunteering to serve veterans. (Applause) Your strength, resilience, and patriotism inspire me every day.

I come from a long line of courageous and brave veterans on both sides of my family. Collectively, they have served in all divisions of the Armed Forces. My Great Granddad Sherwood served on the Sammy B, surviving shark-infested waters in World War II. And my Great Uncle Edward Frederick served in the Korean War and received the Purple Heart.

Many of my uncles have served in the Vietnam War, as did my beloved Great Grandpa Charles Randall, who was stationed as an Airman in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where he met and married my Grandma Junikae. (Applause)

When my journey working with our veterans began nearly five years ago when I was in high school, I never imagined the scale of its impact. My goal was to help equalize and improve access to these benefits for our Native veterans, who have so valiantly served our country.

And today, I am proud to share that this guide has been adopted statewide, with printed copies available in all five major tribal centers on our North Dakota reservations. (Applause) But this is just the beginning. I am committed to building upon this work to advance resources for our courageous veterans.

At Stanford University, where I study economics and international relations, I am passionate about using my education to create economic opportunities for our Native veterans. And looking ahead, I am excited about the prospect of collaborating directly with DAV to enhance access to VA services, especially for veterans in rural remote areas.

As I reflect upon the sacrifices you make every day, I am humbled to be in your presence. And I know that no one is more deserving than you. You have rightfully earned your right to access the best benefits that this country has to offer through your bravery and dedication.

Thank you, once again, for this incredible honor and for inviting me into your amazing community. And a special thank you to all DAV staff who have worked diligently to make this event happen. I look forward to continuing to serve our veteran heroes in the years to come.

And I'm also really happy to present the DAV with a gift to Barry Jesinoski as a thank you for this incredible opportunity. (Applause)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Thank you so much. This is awesome. Thank you. It's an honor.

(Whereupon, Adjutant Jesinoski received the gift from Ms. Marcum, after which Ms. Marcum withdrew from the stage, and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: DAV and the Auxiliary's shared mission of ensuring promises are kept to America's heroes and their families relies on the compassion and generosity of thousands who volunteer their time to honor the sacrifices that make our freedoms and way of life possible.

Whether in VA hospitals, on the road as volunteer drivers, or in countless communities across this beautiful nation, their compassion for our veterans and their continued efforts to keep our promise to those who served is what defines us as an organization.

Today we honor two individuals who have made service to those who served their life's calling.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to announce the 2024 DAV Volunteer of the Year, John Makas of St. Petersburg, Florida. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Mr. Makas and Mr. Kleindienst advanced to the stage to receive the award, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

MR. LEWIS: Over the past 15 years John Makas has logged nearly 5900 lifetime volunteer hours working to improve the lives of veterans as a department benefits advocate. He is also the commander of DAV Chapter 4 in New Port Richey, Florida, and a member of Auxiliary Unit 18 in Bradenton.

In addition to the claims work he does, Mr. Makas often volunteers his time delivering medical equipment, assisting with yard work, and performing home repairs for veterans in need in his community.

MR. JOHN MAKAS: Thank you. I'd like to say thank you for this award. It's humbling, to say the least. You people are amazing people and I'm honored to be able to work with you.

My job has been relatively easy with all the support I have from the Department of Florida and all the great people that work within there. So I'm honored to represent you guys, as well.

We have a lot to do to get the newer veterans to come in. We need to take the time as service officers to sit down and get to know them a little bit. Let them get to know us. Because they're not going to confide in you if they don't know who you are. Sometimes that means being a little vulnerable and that's okay. You know? It's important. We are the future and they are the future. We've got to pass the torch.

A friend of mine told me one time, a dear friend, J.B., God bless you, "Never let yourself become more important than the people you help." Take a little bit of that home with you. Think about that when you're out there talking to those people and helping those people.

I'd like to thank my son, my family, for all the support and understanding when I'm running around being crazy. But it's what you do. Once again, I'm not an eloquent speaker. I just talk from my heart. And I want to thank every single one of you for all the inspiration that you've provided to me and all the faith that you put in me to do the job that I've done.

God bless you. Thank you. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Mr. Makas and Mr. Kleindienst withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, John. It is now my pleasure to introduce this year's DAV Auxiliary Volunteer of the Year, Dorothy Robinson of Munford, Tennessee. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Robinson, Auxiliary Adjutant Clos, and Auxiliary Commander Hurley advanced to the stage, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

MR. LEWIS: Dorothy Robinson is the adjutant of Auxiliary Unit 116 in Munford and has accumulated nearly 1400 volunteer hours over the past 20 years helping veterans and their families. She is a regular presence at the Lieutenant Colonel Luke Weathers Jr. VA Medical Center in Memphis, Tennessee.

As her unit's volunteer representative, she organizes and schedules other Auxiliary volunteers. She also helps with moral programs such as coffee and lemonade service and works with the clinic's caregiver support program and at suicide prevention events.

MS. DOROTHY ROBINSON: Greetings officers and members and guests. I want to thank Debra Burns – she's a CDCE (Inaudible) services at the Lieutenant Colonel Luke Weathers Jr. VAMC in Memphis, Tennessee – for your nominating me for this award.

My husband, Millard Robinson became a DAV member in 1973 but I had no idea that there was a DAV Auxiliary until 2004. The unit described for me all the valued, varied activities that we participate in at the VA hospital and in the community.

This sounded like it was right up my alley as I was looking for something to do since my sons were now grown and had finished, were no longer active in or involved in school and sports activities.

The fact that this unit was actually directly helping veterans impressed me. I joined the Auxiliary and immediately began volunteering with the various unit activities at the VAMC. As time went on I became the VAVS deputy and have been now the VAVS representative for the past 14 years.

Over the past 20 years my unit expanded and modified the unit activities and I also found additional things that I could personally do as well as like assisting in traffic management during the VA's drive-through COVID vaccine campaign.

I want to thank my Unit Number 116 for always encouraging and supporting volunteerism and working hard to ensure that we have the resources to continue supporting our various VAVS activities. I also want to thank my family – my sons, Millard and William, my grandchildren and great-grandchildren for their support and assistance in my volunteer efforts, as well.

Like my great-granddaughter Breanna Tinsley, who is here in the audience and who is an Auxiliary member, who is with me but she also helps package the items we take to the VA for our bi-weekly "Beverage Brigade" program commonly called "Coffee Call."

I have thoroughly enjoyed helping our veterans and their families at the VAMC and look forward to continuing to do so as long as I can.

Thank you to the DAV and the Auxiliary for selecting me as the recipient of the 2024 DAV Auxiliary Volunteer of the Year. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Ms. Robinson and Mr. Kleindienst withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Before we go any further, DAV would like to take the opportunity to thank some special friends. As everyone here knows, the struggle for justice too often eludes the veterans, survivors and families who confront new battles long after their wartime service concludes.

Fortunately, we have an amazing partner who supports our mission in so many important ways. Our friends and supporters at Chisholm, Chisholm and Kilpatrick in Providence, Rhode Island, are a friend to our cause and a friend to all who've served.

This past year the law firm donated \$200,000 to support DAV's no-cost programs and services.

We are joined by CCK's partners Robert Chisholm, Scott Kilpatrick, and Zach Stolz. (Applause) (Whereupon, the CCK partners advanced to the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: In 2008 Chisholm, Chisholm, and Kilpatrick initially collaborated with DAV in representing veterans with their appeals before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Since then, the firm has represented nearly 17,000 veterans in court with an overall success rate of over 91.8 percent. (Applause)

In addition to its work with our service and legal departments, the firm has donated well over \$1,225,000 to DAV. (Applause)

To honor all of our nation's disabled veterans, the money donated has supported projects such as the care and maintenance of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial and DAV's many services and programs.

We are incredibly grateful for Chisholm, Chisholm, and Kilpatrick's support and its most recent gift of \$200,000. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the members of CCK presented a ceremonial check to the commander and adjutant, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

ZACHARY STOLZ, ESQUIRE: Hi, everybody.

(Response of "Hi" and "Hello.")

ATTORNEY STOLZ: Thank you, National Commander Espinosa and National Adjutant Jesinoski. It means so much for me, personally, to be here. I began my legal career at DAV, as Barry knows, back in 2004 at DAV's Washington, D.C., headquarters, representing disabled veterans and their families in appeals before the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. So I was fortunate to begin my legal career with the best.

CCK and DAV have now been in partnership representing veterans and their families in the federal courts for over 16 years. (Applause) Our partnership – I know. It's amazing. Me, too. It went fast. Our partnership has resulted in over 16,000 appeals being filed in the CAVC with an overall success rate of over 90 percent.

In addition to that, CCK is very proud to have obtained 110 precedential decisions which have helped millions of veterans by overruling some of VA's erroneous interpretations of federal law and have provided more clarity in the VA benefit system.

We are humbled by the trust DAV has placed in CCK and honored by our friendship with DAV. Today, we are so proud to present this check for \$200,000 to support DAV in its mission serving our nation's heroes.

Thank you so much for this opportunity. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the members of CCK withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Since 9/11 veterans have been blessed with many companies who offer special gifts or discounts around Veterans Day. Unfortunately, some of that generosity seems to be waning as we get further and further from that terrible day in our nation's history.

But make no mistake, we remain grateful to every company who makes supporting veterans a part of their philanthropic efforts. And we're particularly thankful for Golden Corral, the first company to offer a free thank-you meal to veterans nationwide. (Applause)

Through the pandemic and through thick and thin Golden Corral has consistently supported DAV chapters and departments through donations, outreach, and other support.

In 2023, DAV was able to reach out to more than 189,000 veterans who were provided free meals at Golden Corral restaurants during their annual Military Appreciation Night. Additionally, we raised over \$1 million during the event in 2023.

Since the program's inception, Golden Corral restaurants have served over 6 million free meals to veterans and active-duty military and helped raise more than \$19.5 million to support state and local service programs. (Applause)

Not only that, DAV has also had the honor of joining our friends at Golden Corral in supporting Camp Corral since it was founded in 2011. Camp Corral serves children of America's wounded, ill and fallen military heroes by offering a unique summer camp program where they can make connections, build coping skills, and increase self-confidence. These incredible kids spend a week having fun with their peers and making memories to last a lifetime.

This summer, with DAV's support, Camp Corral is sending more than 2,800 children from across the country to 20 different camp locations, including new camp partners in South Carolina, San Diego, and Texas. (Applause) Having served 33,000 children so far, DAV is dedicated to serving thousands more in the years to come.

To aid in this mission, DAV established the Just B Kids program to provide scholarships for more children to attend Camp Corral. So far this year, DAV departments and chapters, along with the Auxiliary, have raised significant funds to get kids to those camps.

I am happy to present a check totaling \$1 million to Camp Corral today. (Applause)

We'll now invite to the stage Golden Corral's Travis Caison and Camp Corral's Phil Kowalczyck. They'll be joined at the podium by AnnMarie and Charitable Service Trust President Dick Marbes before we send them to the bank with their special gift. (Laughter and applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Caison and Mr. Kowalczyck, Auxiliary Commander Hurley and Charitable Service Trust and Past National Commander Marbes advanced to the stage for the presentation, at which time an official photo was taken.)

MR. LEWIS: Representing our partners at Golden Corral is Travis Caison, associate director of marketing. Travis has been with Golden Corral for six years and is honored to have worked directly on Golden Corral's military initiatives for the past five years. Travis oversees Golden Corral's military philanthropic efforts, including in-restaurant fundraising campaigns for Camp Corral and Military Appreciation Night.

Joining him is Phil Kowalczyck. Phil joined Camp Corral as CEO in 2022 with a proven track record in leading international companies and nonprofit organizations. He also volunteers as a mentor at DAV Patriot Boot Camp.

MR. PHIL KOWALCZYCK: Thank you, National Commander Espinosa. To the DAV, the DAV Auxiliary, and all of the departments in the DAV and chapters, this is a record level of support and it makes my heart swell.

You know, today I really wanted to share a note that was submitted with a recent donation in honor of an Army soldier lost in battle. And the note reads:

"Our son Michael went to Camp Corral for the first time this year and it 100 percent changed his life. He is still, months later, bringing it up and pumping up his sister to go.

"He was so scared to go to camp, often becoming so sad that he would begin crying and shut down. He didn't think he would last a day.

"We practically had to drag him out of that camp. (Laughter) He is a changed human because of it and we can't wait for more kids to experience this, too.

"In memory of First Lieutenant Brian Bradshaw, killed in action, June 25th, 2009. 'Uncle Brian' (choking up) who would have been right there cheering Michael on."

I really don't want to cry in front of a bunch of Marines, okay? (Laughter and applause)

At Camp Corral our mission is to help transform the lives of children of wounded, ill, and fallen military heroes through camp, through advocacy, and through enrichment programs.

You know I find that word "transformation" pretty daunting. But every summer I meet children who tell me their story and the impact that Camp Corral has had for them. This note is just one testimony – 100 percent changed Michael's life, and he wants to share it with his sister while his mom is sending us a donation to other kids can go. Well, that is transformation.

We are so grateful to be able to do this work. And we can't do it without you. On behalf of the military children we serve through summer camp across this country, thank you.

The lives of these children are changed because of your hard work and generosity. We are grateful for your support and, importantly, for more than 12 years of dedicated partnership between DAV, Golden Corral and Camp Corral.

The funds you raise mean a child gets to go to a high-quality camp, make friends, build skills, learn about independence, and just be a kid. And there is no cost to these families because you raise funds for the families that, while deserving, likely couldn't afford this kind of life-changing experience.

This year 2,800 children from 48 states are attending summer camp. Thousands of kids at camp is great. But we focus on the impact of each child.

We know our program is having the intended impact because we ask the kids, we ask counselors and parents and we conduct accredited research and it is focused on some specific areas.

Connection – are they making friends? When we asked veteran parents if their child has a friend who understands what it's like to be a part of the military family, 78 percent of the parents say no. But when they are at Camp Corral they are surrounded by kids who "get it," who have lived it, and who share it. That's why 87 percent of our kids say they made friends at camp and they believe those are going to be long-lasting relationships.

We also want to foster self-confidence and perhaps more important than ever in this day, are coping skills that promote mental wellness in the face of challenges.

Look, all of that is important. And it's what you should hold us accountable for to ensure that your money is being invested well. But to be perfectly honest, we also value that these kids, who take on responsibility and family care early in their life, should just be a kid for a while. So we ask them, did you have fun?

We also want to ensure that our program is continuing to grow and gain further reach with our kiddos and their families. So in addition to summer camp, we offer spring and fall family camps, where kids of all ages can experience the magic of camp, create memories together, and for some, see their family in a whole new way. This year we will serve more than 100 families in our family camps.

And we just completed another successful summer. And I want to talk to you today just a minute about the impact of time. DAV has been a signature partner with us since 2013 and over time DAV has had a tremendous impact.

Over the course of those years, Camp Corral has sponsored more than 33,000 children. DAV's support, alone, has provided for 6,500 of those children. This year we are sending more than 2,800 children to summer camp and DAV's generous support, more than 800 of these young heroes. I think that deserves a round of applause. (Applause)

Think about the impact of ten years. You know, it's been said that the human condition will overestimate what you can do in one year and underestimate what you can do in ten. So in just over a decade, Camp Corral has grown from 1 camp in 1 state to more than 20 camps in 17 states.

And we have a strategic plan to continue to increase our footprint where veteran families live. We are growing and your commitment has grown with us. Thank you. (Applause)

In addition to increasing the number of camps, we're also trying to grow our impact over the lifetime of a camper. Do you realize that if a new Camp Corral kiddo went to camp in 2014 they'd be 18 today?

Last year I shared the news that we started a program called the SALUTE Leadership Program. It is designed for 16 and 17 year olds and offers a unique service and leadership opportunity to build experiences for Camp Corral kids who are interested in becoming camp counselor.

Last year, I mentioned a terrific young man by the name of Khord Cooksey. He is completing his second year in the SALUTE program and was a camper at Camp Corral for several years. And when we asked him why he wanted to be a part of SALUTE Khord said, "Well, I would like to help campers learn self-confidence. I hope to be a teacher and I want the skills to teach with compassion while helping others."

Last year, I could tell you about him. This year I am honored to give you the opportunity to meet him. Khord Cooksey and his parents, Gerrod and Kelly Cooksey, are here today. Please give a warm welcome to Khord. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Mr. Cooksey joined Mr. Kowalczyck at the podium.)

MR. KHORD COOKSEY: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

MR. COOKSEY: And thank you. My name is Khord Cooksey. I am a 17-year old high school senior and I live in Evans, Georgia, which is just outside of Augusta. (Applause) My dad has served in the U.S. Air Force Reserves, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Army Reserves since 1999. (Applause)

I was born at Fort Hood, Texas, while my dad was on a 15-month deployment to Iraq with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade. He was able to come home on R&R to see me when I was six weeks old and then returned from deployment when I was 14 months old.

He was home for one year then deployed to Iraq again for another year. He then came home for 12 months, then deployed to Afghanistan for a year.

We lived on Fort Hood until I was seven years old, then my dad was transferred to Joint Base Elmendorf – Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska. (Cheer) We lived there for three years then moved to Evans, Georgia, where my dad is now stated at Fort Gordon with the Army Reserves. (Applause)

I attended Camp Corral at YMCA Camp Hanes in North Carolina for four years. I was accepted and planned to go in 2020 but camp was cancelled that year due to COVID. Last year, the summer of '23, I attended Camp Corral for two weeks as a counselor-in-training.

I am excited to be in the SALUTE program as it gives me the chance to experience new opportunities. It gives me the feeling that I am part of something bigger than me and has provided me with the opportunities and skills that I will carry with me forever.

With SALUTE I am constantly learning things to help me improve as a person, a leader, and, eventually, a professional.

My goal is to become a high school band director. I was just recently selected to serve as the drum major of my 175-member high school marching band for the second year in a row. (Applause) And I believe part of that is due to the skills I have learned through this program.

SALUTE has taught me many ways of being an effective leader and friend. The activities we have done in this program have taught me to be a better person, a better listener, and how to be proactive in what I do.

In May I was certified in Mental Health First Aid through SALUTE. This will be an invaluable skill as I continue my journey working with teens and young adult.

My passion for teaching came from my desire to help others and my love of music. Being a camper, a counselor-in-training, and a SALUTE member has helped me pursue this.

What I have learned over the last six years has helped me excel in my "Teaching as a Profession" pathway at school, within my community, and in extracurricular activities.

Given the position that I am in right now, a high school senior, my dream is quickly drawing nearer. Camp Corral has helped me realize this is truly the path I want to take and has proven that I just may be good at it. (Applause) I am honored to have been given these opportunities. And thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Cooksey withdrew from the stage and Mr. Kowalczyck returned to the podium.)

MR. KOWALCZYCK: Like you, we can't wait to see Khord grow as a young leader and the incredible impact that he will have because of DAV's sponsorship. You helped make this possible.

There are more than 2.3 million of America's children who are eligible for Camp Corral so there is still more work to be done. Camp Corral is proud to be recognized as a thought leader within this community and we are honored to serve these children, and as Khord demonstrates, to have the chance to serve children from military families throughout their childhood.

Thank you, DAV. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Caison and Mr. Kowalczyck, and Charitable Service Trust President and Past National Commander Marbes withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I now have the distinct honor and privilege to introduce National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski. I have had the distinct honor of being the first DAV national commander to serve a full term with this Marine at the helm.

And if this past year is any indication of what's to come, we can all rest assured that DAV will continue to be the best veterans' service organization there is. (Applause)

Of course, Barry has been at this for a while, so it's no surprise that his first year as national adjutant was a successful one for DAV and the veterans it serves.

Barry started his DAV journey as a national service officer and went on to lead some of our largest and busiest offices. He then served between Washington and National Headquarters in various roles, ultimately becoming the first veteran to lead both as executive director.

In June of last year, Past National Adjutant Marc Burgess retired after more than a quarter-century with DAV. While Marc, of course, would be missed, all of us knew we were in good hands because Barry has a long history of answering the call, no matter where he is needed, no matter the changes and challenges it brings.

He not only steps up, he brings vision and dedication that have a way of building upon something great and making it even greater. He sees opportunities to improve and he doggedly pursues them. And

every step of the way he has you, and us, and the veteran community at large, at the forefront. If you need evidence of that, just listen to the report he will deliver today.

Please welcome your DAV National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon the commander withdrew from and Adjutant Jesinoski advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Good morning, everyone.

(Response of "Good morning.")

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Thank you, Commander. And thank you for your incredible contributions to all of you that makes everything that we do possible. Nancy, you are an extremely important leader and you've been an ongoing source of inspiration for all of our fellow veterans, for everyone out here. And serving alongside of you will absolutely be one of the greatest memories that I carry of my service in DAV.

I want to – before I get into my report, I would like to share, hopefully I won't get choked up. I already did, I already shed some tears and ran my makeup a little bit ago. (Laughter) I want to share the incredible gift that Amelia presented to me, not only to me, to all of you. And it came with a card that says:

"To all DAV membership, please know how very special you are to our family. Grandma Junikae made this dream catcher to thank you for your kind and strong support, always to be remembered. All our best. Love Amelia, Randall Marcum and family."

And here is the incredible dream catcher. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Jesinoski held the dream catcher up for all to see before placing it back on the table.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: There is a note on the dream catcher. It says, "The hawk feathers is from a deceased baby hawk. Fly high DAV veterans. May God bless our troops and may God bless America." Thank you, Amelia and thank you Grandma Junikae. (Applause)

Well, I'm mostly dry-eyed. (Laughter) Good thing is we get to sit and watch a video. I'd like to begin my report today by taking a look at what we've accomplished over the last year.

(Whereupon, the video "The Year in Review" was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Thank you. And thanks to every single one of you. Thanks to all the volunteers around the nation, every member of DAV and Auxiliary, and our professional team for making everything you just saw possible.

In the 1950s Dr. Curt Richter, a psycho-biologist at Johns Hopkins and an Army veteran, conducted a study on rats – not trench rats. (Laughter) In an experiment he put rodents into water buckets and he recorded how long it took for them to give up. Bear with me, please, this is – there is a point.

This was an unusual test because, as opposed to "fight or flight," it put the test subjects into a situation where they had no foreseeable way to alter their fate. Without any chance of escape, they all gave up and drowned in a matter of minutes.

So he conducted a second phase where he introduced hope as a variable. This time he put the rats into buckets and then, just before they drowned, he plucked them out. But after only a brief recovery – in case you mistook him for an animal rights proponent – he returned them to the water.

What he found was extraordinary. Once a test group experienced an intervention, the thought that there was even a narrow path to survival, they all continued to swim and tread water and to fight to go on significantly longer.

When they thought there was even a chance someone might intervene, they all challenged the impossibility of their situation and would go on until they reached their total physical and mental limits.

In spite of the cruelty of these tests, our early founders may have appreciated the effort. They had to deal with millions of rats in the trenches of World War I. Anything that cut back on the global rodent population was, we can imagine, a good thing to them.

And, like those who carry the torch they lit more than a century ago, DAV members throughout history would not have needed an experiment to come to Richter's conclusion about hope. The value of hope is something that disabled veterans and our families understand deeply.

Whether in training, a time of war, or our rehabilitation, we know how important it is to have, in our most desperate moments, the belief that things can get better. The idea that we will not leave our own behind, whether that's on the battlefield or in our post-military lives, is the foundation of our great cause.

And yet, too many of us have experienced an absence of hope. Or have been left with a withering question.

How many of us here have known a veteran whose life ended too soon? And among those who have, how many have asked yourselves one of the most difficult questions that we as a community of veterans can ask: was there something or something more that I might have done?

The sobering reality behind the suicide epidemic that confronts every one of us here is that our brothers and sisters are, in shocking numbers, and at this very moment, living with an absence, or at least a severe deficit, of hope.

Over the course of the COVID pandemic we saw suicide rates increase for our sisters by nearly a quarter. It's one of many important issues that we highlighted in our most recent women veterans report. They are twice as likely as male veterans to attempt to end their lives.

And male veterans are already far too proficient at contributing to the staggering statistics that make suicide an epidemic in our community. Though the situation we face is dire, the solution is right here in front of us. It's you. And you are DAV.

Through your membership and your willingness to be an ambassador of our cause, you have the power to help veterans out of situations where despair is their constant companion. You can provide that glimmer of hope that they need to hold on.

And, as we all know, sometimes that sliver of hope is all someone needs to tread water long enough to see beyond the crisis. If they have enough to weather the storm, they may have enough left over, enough hope, that with a little more of our help to find the new mission or paradigm that can convert them from casualties into contributors.

This is the reason we were founded. And it remains the same reason that we exist today. We must find the solutions to the challenges we face. We must be the source of hope and of renewal for one another.

The opportunity to save lives – and let's be very straightforward about this: we save lives – is the greatest reward and the most humbling responsibility that comes with being part of our community.

DAV is not a charity that has a single program dedicated to suicide prevention. We are a charity with many, many initiatives, all of which, in one fashion or another, save lives. And the ability to completely transform a life is the reward that we get for our involvement in DAV's mission. We deal in hope.

Let's take a look at a journey of a deserving veteran whose life was forever changed through DAV. (Whereupon, a video of Ginger MacCutcheon was viewed.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Ginger was totally betrayed by her fellow soldiers. As a medic, it was her mission to aid the casualties of war and instead she was made a victim of unthinkable trauma. But she was totally renewed by her association with DAV. She bravely shared her experiences.

From her involvement with her chapter and the Department of Ohio, she was made aware of Save-a-Warrior, an incredible program with which DAV is honored to partner. And in spite of her decades of suffering, she found purpose and an outlet for her compassion and leadership.

What you didn't know, what no one fully knew from the video, is that Ginger was extremely sick when she was interviewed. She wanted to make the most of her remaining time. On April 14th, just weeks after Ginger was in D.C. alongside our team to advocate for women veterans, the DAV Department of Ohio lost its second junior vice-commander to cancer.

Department Commander and NSO Supervisor Jake Drost was with her in the hospital in her final days. She said she found it ironic that she had finally, after all those years, fully gotten her life together in time to face her death. But the lesson Ginger taught all of us is one of hope and triumph, of justice and of service. The impact she made in the lives of others will echo and reverberate for untold thousands who benefit from her contributions. And she inspires all of us to this day. It's never too late.

Our investment in Save a Warrior and its National Center of Excellence for Complex Post Traumatic Stress which bears our name is one example of how we're doubling down on the potential of our fellow veterans. We want the very best for veterans in all phases of their lives.

We've similarly partnered with Joseph House in Cincinnati, an addiction treatment and recovery program that DAV's Charitable Service Trust has supported for decades. It's a new facility. And it was made possible by a \$1.5 million grant from our Trust. It enhances the care it provides to all those who served and enables regular, ongoing treatment for women veterans, which Joseph House couldn't do before.

We also continue our partnership with Boulder Crest and the Gary Sinise Foundation, and support and collaborate on a wide variety of national and grassroots initiatives providing a lifeline to veterans in their most desperate hours.

But the bulk of our work involves meeting veterans where they are and creating or connecting them with resources to address their immediate needs, help them achieve justice, and empower them to pursue their maximum potential.

That includes the hope that we provide veterans facing natural disasters and the combined efforts of our DAV service officers, some 3,600 strong, who took more than 2.8 million actions, filing more than 209,000 claims last year, alone.

It includes the 100-plus job fairs we've helped facilitate so 31,723 veterans and spouses could connect with patriotic employers last year. In the last ten years, since we launched our employment initiative, DAV's work has resulted in more than 184,000 job offers. If that's not something to be hopeful about, I don't know what it. (Applause)

When it comes to the potential we see for our fellow veterans, we're digging in. The investment we made in nearly 100 entrepreneurs last year has the potential to change the world. At a time of division and partisanship, the veterans who we're serving should be a reminder to our fellow Americans about the values and ingenuity that make our country truly exceptional.

You may have seen many of these folks in online DAV pitch contests. They include veterans like Jonathan Kuniholm, a Marine who lost his arm in Iraq and whose company, Stumpworx, is updating the decades-old technology that upper extremity amputees rely upon. Last night at the pitch contest he won \$15,000 to continue his important work. (Applause) And it comes at a time when he really needs it.

And Oscar Vazquez, whose venture, Cancermune, uses immuno-therapeutics and artificial intelligence to solve the most complicated challenges that confront cancer medicine.

Jasmine Paul's Wealth Playground education firm empowers young people through financial literacy.

And Tyler Southern, who sacrificed three limbs in combat in Afghanistan, and whose company, S-F-H, stands for – well, Still bleeping Here. (Laughter) Tyler's mission is to remind us of the resilience of the survivors in our midst and to contribute to organizations like DAV.

While one veteran's dream may be to succeed in business, others may be focused on something a bit more basic, but nonetheless essential to their quality of life. For some veterans, a primary goal is just staying in their homes as long as possible. But they can't do that alone and that's why caregivers are so vital.

But know that more than half of all caregivers are at risk of burnout at any given time. Now, when the people who matter the most in ensuring a veteran's quality of life tell us that their lives are becoming unsustainable, we have an incredible resource to get them the relief they desperately need and deserve.

I would wager that we have many, many caregivers here right now who could use the program. And nearly everyone else knows a veteran, relative, or a friend who could use DAV Caregiver Support.

We can proudly boast that, to date, support specialists have provided nearly 5,000 calls, 6,000 texts, and more than 1,500 emails to caregivers in need. And we're just now scratching the surface of what we can do and how this program could evolve over time, to provide respite and other resources, and extend the time veterans are able to spend in their own homes with the people they love the most.

We believe veterans have the power to confront the most daunting challenges our nation faces. If given the opportunity to do just that, they will reconnect with the part of themselves they thought they lost when they were changed in service.

And it's a good thing that we're seeing all this potential right now because we have challenges of our own to face. Our demographics will see a substantial shift in the coming years. In the next quarter century we'll transition to a veterans' community that is smaller by a third and more diverse.

The DAV-championed PACT Act and our advocacy on exposures alone provide a bleak forecast. They tell us that veterans will face chronic and sometime life-threatening health issues that require a vigilant DAV and a responsive Department of Veterans Affairs.

As our voting block decreases, our needs will grow. The price tag on our benefits and care has tripled since our nation was attacked in 2001. The number of veterans serving in Congress, in spite of some recent gains, is near a record low. And we're getting further and further away from the wars that left so many of us forever changed.

The road ahead is going to have many hurdles. Where our last 25 years of advocacy has resulted in an incredible expansion of care and benefits, more than a century of fighting for veterans tells us we could face a backslide.

I don't say this to dash your optimism. In fact, our DAV CAN, our Commanders Action Network, has already generated more than one million messages to the 118th Congress, which is a new record. (Applause) Thank you for, all of you, for making that happen.

The veterans whose voices are represented through DAV membership are a small percentage of the total who benefit from our no-cost services and efficacy on Capitol Hill, and an even smaller percentage of the 4.9 million disabled veterans who our cause represents.

But that goes back to the rats, and the experiment, and the value of hope. Hope always requires extra effort. And while we ask so much of our active members and leaders, we hope that you will make recruiting part of your efforts.

For some reason, even though we help so many veterans in so many ways, most of our members do not recruit new members and take exception, sometimes, to being called "recruiters." It's as if,

for some reason, they'd been told that some military recruiters might stretch the truth or something. (Laughter)

But our ability to represent the interests of our fellow veteran depends on our ability to add voices to our cause. We should, whenever we help a veteran, ask if he or she is a member. If you don't like the word "recruiter," just call yourself an "asker."

But always ask them to join. It's a service to do so. And it's a positive way to validate the impact of the services that we provide. You never know when something that simple is going to be the encouragement someone needs when they need it most. We all need hope.

Before I conclude, I want to talk about a veteran that I helped early in my time as a national service officer.

(Whereupon, a photo of Adjutant Jesinoski, Executive Director Edward "Randy" Reese and Ed Hartman appeared on the screen.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Let me make a note – talk with DAN and Rob about slide choices after the session. (Laughter) In case you don't know who that is up there, or you think that it's a failed boy band, (Laughter) that is Randy Reese on your far right, Ed Hartman next to him. He didn't realize you shouldn't smoke. (Laughter) And some other fellow next to him almost 30 years ago at the DAV National Service Officer Training Academy. Thanks a lot, guys. (Laughter and applause) Well, what I wouldn't give to be that slim again. (Laughter)

As we've established, I was a lot younger when an Army veteran named John Leppelman came into my office. Although I did my best for every veteran in my caseload, I became captivated by the issue of post-traumatic stress, its causes, its symptoms, and how VA treated, both medically and in claims decisions, our veterans ravaged by this scourge. It became my specialty and the word was spreading. I was proud of that. Soon, the majority of my cases involved post-traumatic stress.

Most of our clients at the time, as they are now, were Vietnam veterans. But something about John seemed different. He'd had a hard life. It wasn't unusual for many of the folks that we helped in Seattle at the time and especially our combat Vietnam veterans. But his age was expressed beyond the lines in his face and the undercurrent of intensity that coursed beneath his thousand-yard stare.

When I dug into his records, I was in awe. John was introduced to Vietnam through his participation in Operation Junction City, the only combat jump of the war.

As he adjusted to war, he had more than the enemy to face. The soldiers around him were being wounded by the dozens. His weapon would malfunction after every six to ten rounds. And seeing a brave man's hands holding a jammed rifle left him, rightfully so, infuriated.

He survived ambushes and being ordered to carry out suicide missions. He was wounded. His hearing was devastated. When he lost the use of his arm, he was accused of malingering. After a time, he began to feel as if his command, not the enemy, was intent on taking his life.

In the Central Highlands, his short-staffed company was being ordered to take on hardened NVA battalions. He decided to take what was called a "short." Riverboats needed soldiers. He'd be happy to extend a full year in Vietnam to get away from leaders he felt he couldn't trust and to avoid the impossible situation that they would create. But he was devastated when he learned that his former company was decimated by both enemy contact and friendly fire.

Along Vietnam's waterways, "Lepp," as he was known, experienced the Tet offensive and the enemy using civilians as human shields. At that time, he said that he felt the politicians would not allow the military to achieve victory in Vietnam. Nonetheless, he extended for a third tour in country.

Though he'd been commended for combat service, after a disagreement with his captain, a reduction in rank, and some fun work details, he decided to try a new occupation. The war zone, he felt, was getting "too stateside."

He signed up for special forces and volunteered to become a Ranger. He loved it. But his time as a LRRP was short-lived. While the enemy never took him out, two types of malaria conspired and he was medically evacuated out of Vietnam.

He scored his final Article 15 at Ford Ord for refusing to put a base bumper sticker on new Camero. (Laughter) John Leppelman was, at least from his records, a terrible garrison soldier but he was, deep down, a brave and honorable man who had given more than his fair share in service.

In spite of the distrust he held for most brass, he left the Army after 35 months in Vietnam with a Bronze Star with "V" Devise, the Purple Heart, and, in spite of a hardy dose of non-judicial punishment, a commendation medal. The uniform he changed out of to avoid being mistreated by protesters also carried his CIB, his Combat Parachute Wings, and an air medal.

The man I met in 1996 was someone who had more than his share of difficulties. The habit of distrusting people in positions of authority was compounded by the way he was welcomed home by protesters.

He was a man who lived with the war every day. And between the trauma he carried back to the states and the injuries that changed his abilities, he had an edge. And his coping mechanisms had severely limited his quality of life. His hope was in extremely short supply.

But he was changed by DAV. Not only was he better able to take care of himself and his family when he began receiving the benefits he had earned, he had experienced a modicum of justice that had been long overdue. And if he could get a fair shake at the hands of the United States government, what else was possible?

He ultimately had a successful life as an entrepreneur. And he was loved and revered by many. As many of you may realize, although this is a true story of hope, it's also my way of recognizing and honoring our Vietnam veterans and all that they endured. Thank you for your service and your sacrifice. (Applause)

Although John and I had lost touch before he passed away in Seattle in 2019, I'm honored to have known him and to have had the opportunity to help him when he came to DAV for assistance. Though it's impossible, really, to say for certain, I believe that the hope he gained after experiencing our services helped him in other areas of his life.

We can never truly understand what is happening in the hearts and minds of our fellow veterans or the others that we love. And many of us have experienced that lingering question – what could I have done? Or could I have done more?

The beauty of being DA is the knowledge that we're given to change a life, a family, and a household. We know and offer so many services that can replace apathy and despondency with purpose and with light.

Thank you for being that light in your communities. Thank you for being a forward ambassador and connector for veterans, caregivers, and their spouses in your communities. And thank you for ensuring the promise is kept to the deserving heroes, like John Leppelman, and like Ginger, and like Jonathan, Jasmine, Tyler, and the many, many more who count upon us for hope.

Commander, this concludes my report. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Jesinoski returned to his seat and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Barry. That was a wonderful report. The chair will entertain a motion to accept our national adjutant's outstanding report.

MR. PAUL HERMAN: National commander, Paul Herman, adjutant for the State of Louisiana, makes a motion to accept the national adjutant's report.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Do I have a second?

(Whereupon, the motion was seconded by a member of Unit 109, Florida.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered.

Humana is one of the nation's leading health and well-being companies and DAV is proud to partner with an organization that provides veterans with resources to maximize their physical and mental health.

Their relationship with DAV began in 2020, and they have championed our members ever since.

Joining us today from Humana is Cara Brown and Stephanie Muckey.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from the podium as Ms. Brown and Ms. Muckey advanced to the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: As Humana's national director of key relationships, Cara Brown brings a wealth of management and leadership experience to serve customers in diverse and demanding markets. She has been with Humana for 18 years and specializes in growing and building out new territories for the Fortune 500 company.

Stephanie Muckey leads Humana's national health equity and social impact strategy, where her focus is on both community and business integration to improve the clinical and social health outcomes of veterans and their families. Her career developed out of her passion to serve and invest in the military communities that she has lived in for twenty-plus years as a military spouse.

MS. CARA BROWN: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

MS. BROWN: What an honor to be in front of such an amazing audience. I am so honored to be on this stage representing Humana as an associate for the past 19 years. I am a granddaughter of two World War II veterans, Army (Bugle plays) and Navy (Bugle plays), and another grandfather that was an Army veteran. (Bugle plays) Working for a company that makes veterans a priority every day and allows me to serve alongside DAV is so meaningful to me, personally.

Humana and DAV began our partnership journey in 2020. We are proud to support the wonderful work the DAV team does every day to improve the lives of veterans and their families.

Humana deeply understands the value of DAV and the important role the organization and all of you play as advocates for veterans and their families who need assistance.

We are so proud of what we have accomplished together so far and look forward to collaborating with you to make a positive impact for veterans across the country. We thank you for your partnership. (Applause)

MRS. STEPHANIE MUCKEY: Thank you, Cara. As a proud Marine spouse, (Bugle plays) caregiver, and DAV Auxiliary lifetime member, I am also humbled and gracious to work alongside all of you in our commitment to veterans, service members, and their families.

At Humana, we're on a mission to remove barriers to good health, one veteran at a time. By uniting with communities, veterans' service organizations, veterans service officers, health care providers, and clinicians, we are working to combat hunger, homelessness, transportation barriers, and loneliness, all risk factors to veterans suicide.

Honoring and serving veterans is at the core of what we do. We're committed to ensuring veterans and their families, no matter their age, race or gender, have access to the care they need and deserve, especially those who stem from underserved and diverse communities.

We have such a passionate team dedicated to making it easier for veterans and their families to achieve their best health.

Just a few of the ways we're doing that include our Face the Fight Veteran suicide prevention efforts, veteran-focused Humana USAA Honor plans for Medicare Advantage beneficiaries, our TRICARE health program administration with the Department of Defense, our designated Veterans' call center, veteran hiring initiatives and health literacy programs.

We also recognize and want to raise awareness of the valuable role a veterans' service officer plays in a veteran's health care journey. Veterans service officers advocate and assist veterans with essential services that support their health care, because no veteran should have to go it alone.

To further strengthen our commitment to amplifying the important support veterans' service officers provide, this year we launched "15 Things Veterans Service Officers Want you to Know," an online video course informed by more than 700 veterans service officers, including some of you in this room today.

Through this collaborative we aim to educate and encourage more veterans to seek out a free, accredited veterans' service officer to assist in navigating benefits and services that can directly improve their health. (Applause)

To all of the veterans' service officers here today, thank you for the critical work you do. And we value your partnership. (Applause)

Another impactful project we've been rolling out this year is the launch of a Veteran Ready Health Care Certificate program for our health care providers and employees at our primary care centers.

CenterWell Senior Primary Care is the largest, fastest-growing senior-focused, value-based care provider in the country and, together with its sister brand, Conviva Care Center, the businesses make up Humana's Primary Care Organization, delivering care to about 318,000 seniors in nearly 300 centers across the country.

When health care professionals and systems are responsive to their patients' cultural backgrounds – and this includes veteran status – patients are more likely to receive appropriate care, to show up to appointments, to follow through with treatment plans, and be more transparent in disclosing their health-related needs.

We are training, preparing and certifying our staff through courses about military culture, communicating with veterans, suicide prevention, and more, enabling a more genuine connection and better support for the unique health needs of aging veterans and their families.

We want our clinicians, providers, communities, agents, associates, and, frankly, our nation to understand our military-affiliated community the same way those of us in this room do, and we want them to take action to address the needs of our veterans and their families.

As a caregiver myself, I can tell you that this work matters (Choking up) and makes a difference in the lives of our veterans and their families. It is truly an honor and privilege to work alongside DAV. On behalf of Humana, we look forward to all we can accomplish together in the months and years to come. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Brown and Ms. Muckey withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. Each year DAV recognizes a veteran who steps up, goes above and beyond and serves as a shining example of fulfilling DAV's commitment in supporting the men and women who served, all despite their illness or injuries.

Terry Hillard enlisted in the Marine Corps (Bugle plays) in 1964 as a machine gunner and didn't waste any time in being sent to Vietnam. His time in combat was marred by fierce fighting and death.

Throughout the 13 months he served in country with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, there were too many firefights to count. However, in the decades to follow Terry would come to find that the Agent Orange exposure would be one of his most brutal battles.

Right after Vietnam, however, Terry chose to serve once again, this time with the Chicago Police Department. He rose through the ranks, was injured in the line of duty, and rounded out his illustrious career by serving as the city's Police Superintendent, Chicago's top cop.

Today, he continues to serve his city and veteran Chicago police officers and other first responders by setting up a club specifically for them to receive VA benefits, thanks to DAV.

A two-time cancer survivor – each stemming from his military service – Terry still takes time out of his day to ensure his brothers and sisters in uniform get what they've already earned. Now, let's get to know Terry a little better.

(Whereupon, a video about the Disabled American Veteran of the Year was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, for his consistent service to his fellow disabled veterans across Chicago, it is my distinct honor to introduce Terry Hillard, our 2024 Disabled American Veteran of the Year and DAV life member of Chapter 42 in Addison, Illinois. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from the podium as Mr. Hillard advanced to the stage for an official photograph, after which he advanced to the podium for remarks.)

MR. TERRY HILLARD: Hello, DAV, and good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

MR. HILLARD: It's great to be surrounded by so many veterans and advocates. And I want to thank you so much to Commander Espinosa for that kind introduction and for this recognition.

Also, when Commander Espinosa called me and let me know that I'd be receiving this award at our national convention, I'm going to tell you, I swelled with pride, big-headed. (Laughter) That was until I was told it was in Phoenix in August. (Laughter) I had a lot of ice water, (Laughter) I'm telling you.

You know, on a serious note, first, let me thank my beautiful wife of 54 years, Dorothy, I call her Dora. (Applause) Like I said, her name is Dorothy. I have been calling her Dora for 57 years. And my wonderful, awesome daughter, Terri Lee, over there. And without their support I know I wouldn't be here on this stage right now with you.

And I want to say thanks to the DAV Chapter 42, Illinois, for allowing us to do the necessary work to earn this meaningful award.

Now when I think about the Chicago Police and Chicago Fire Veterans Club I can't help marvel at its growth. And what started out as a very humble gathering of about 50 people on June 4th, 2022, has now blossomed, and I mean blossomed, into a community of over 200-plus first responders, all thanks to DAV's support. (Applause)

As I stand here today I share this honor with some unsung heroes who make our work possible, people like assistant supervisor of the DAV national service office in Chicago, Carlo Melone, a Marine, (Applause) and senior national service officer John Rodriguez who my wife taught at Washington High School in biology. (Laughter) Their expertise and time have been very instrumental in ensuring that many Chicago police and Chicago fire veterans could access their earned benefits.

We also wouldn't have had our many successes without the DAV Chapter 42 service officers that I'm about to name: Chicago police Sergeant Matt Breen; Chicago fire paramedic in charge Emily Pecoraro; and Chicago firefighter Eric McClean – all veterans and Chicago first responders, themselves. (Applause)

Now, if you take one thing away from our story from this convention today, I hope it's not about me; I hope it's about the Chicago model has proven to work. And far too many of my brothers and sisters in law enforcement and fire departments are afraid to seek benefits that they've earned in service across this nation.

My hope is not just a wish but a call, a call to action. Let's replicate the success of the Chicago model in major cities across the nation. From Philadelphia to Miami, from Boston to Los Angeles, wherever veterans are serving their communities, DAV can and they will make a difference, all they need is another Carlo Melone and John Rodriguez.

And if anyone here wants to learn anything or want to learn any more about what and how we did it in Chicago, find me. I'll be here. Or find Carlo.

But I also want to thank the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police Lodge Number 7 and its president John Catanzara Junior for the use of their building for our meetings. Without their support, their total support, this would not have been possible.

Off key for one minute. The three groups that file the least amount of claims: airline pilots, firefighters and cops. It took me decades to seek my earned benefits. And it pains me to think that others like me are doing the same in this day and age. Four decades is a long time to submit a claim, too long.

And I can still hear the echo from my brother-in-law, Jesse Brown, who served as the executive director of DAV's Washington Headquarters before becoming Secretary of Veterans Affairs. And Jesse used to always remind me, "It is never, ever too late to get what you've earned."

So let's do something about it. Let's replicate the Chicago model nationwide.

I want to thank you again for this great honor. And please know that I have nothing but the utmost respect and admiration, not only for DAV, its incredible leaders, its dedicated service officers, and its awesome staff that helps change the lives of veterans each and every day.

Thank you all. God bless you and please continue to do the awesome work that you do for our veterans. Thank you. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Mr. Hillard withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Our next guest represents a company that goes above and beyond the call of duty to serve those who served, USAA.

Founded in 1922 by a group of 25 military officers in San Antonio to meet the unique needs of the military and veterans' community, USAA is a longtime friend of DAV and the veterans we together serve.

From insurance to banking products and services, the company helps more than 13 million members of the veterans' community protect the interests of their families with an unparalleled level of outstanding service.

Please welcome Retired Major General Robert F. Whittle Junior to the stage. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Retired General Whittle advanced to the stage for a presentation, at which time an official photograph was taken, then Retired General Whittle advanced to the podium.)

MR. LEWIS: Retired General Robert F. Whittle Junior serves as USAA's senior vice president and CEO chief of staff. In his role, Bob guides the strategic execution and coordination of all critical activities for the USAA senior leadership team and the USAA Board of Directors. Bob served 33 years in the Army before retiring in June 2023 as deputy commanding general of operations for U.S. Army North.

MAJOR GENERAL ROBERT F. WHITTLE JUNIOR: How's everybody doing today? (Bugle plays) That would be the Army bugle, I suppose, right? It's good to see you all. Wow, the lights are bright up here. Can't really see the audience but I know you are out there so fantastic.

So, I thought I'd talk about a couple of things. One, you know, I want to thank Nancy and Barry for your leadership of this incredible organization which I did not really know well at all until sitting through all these presentations this morning and learning everything that you all do. The DAV is just amazing.

And so I thought I would just talk briefly about who we are at team USAA. And then if you don't mind I'll talk a little bit about who I think you are here at DAV.

So, first of all, you know they're out there right now, right? We've got soldiers, Marines, airmen, sailors in harm's way. They're out there making sure that the global economy stays open, that we have freedom of navigation. They're guarding the embassies. They're fighting wherever they need to fight: in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, wherever needed.

And they're taking a lot of risk. And when they do that nobody knows better than this audience right here that it's hard on them and their families at home.

You know, back in 1922 service members could not get car insurance. No one would insure them because they moved all the time and they deployed. They were considered high risk. So 25 soldiers got together in San Antonio and they went, okay, how hard can this be? Let's just form an insurance company.

And they formed USAA. In 1922, (sic) one year later, they made the questionable decision of admitting the Navy, as well. (Laughter) And after that we opened it up to the entire Armed Forces. And USAA has been there ever since.

Right now if a service member gets told they have to deploy in 48 hours to anywhere in the Middle East or anywhere in the world and they call USAA and ask for life insurance, they get life insurance immediately. There is not a bunch of medical paperwork because, why?

Well, USAA knows. If you're going to deploy, you're probably pretty healthy, right? We don't need to give you a big physical or anything else. So that's how this incredible company works. I've been there for 15 months. And I just love being in it.

But, let's get back to who you all are. Like we said, they are out there in harm's way on the wall making sure that our freedom stays free. Right? They're making sure that this nation can exist. And when you are out there doing that, you know the reason that you're willing to do it is you know should you give your life for your country, your family is going to be taken care of. Should you be injured, your health is going to be taken care of. And that's what you do here. That's what this incredible organization does.

DAV makes sure that every single service member knows they will have the care they need if something should happen to them. And for that, I just want to say thank you. God bless you. God bless our veterans. And God bless our service members that are in harm's way. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Major General Whittle withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Based locally, TriWest Healthcare Alliance and DAV have a lot in common: we both share a laser focus on exclusively serving the needs of veterans and their families.

The company has been "On a Mission to Serve" our community through access to convenient and affordable health care that truly honors the sacrifices we and our families made as a result of our time in service.

For nearly two decades, TriWest has administered Tricare, and for more than a decade they have provided community care support to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Along the way, they've been a significant supporter of our mission, both through their contributions to our cause and through our shared mission of ensuring promises are kept to our heroes and their families.

Representing TriWest is Senior Vice-President of Strategic Communications and Advocacy Donna Hoffmeier.

(Whereupon, Ms. Hoffmeier advanced to the stage, at which time an official photograph was taken, then she advanced to the podium.)

MR. LEWIS: With more than 30 years of experience, success and accomplishments in the private and public sectors as a senior executive, Donna Hoffmeier is the senior vice-president of strategic communications and advocacy at TriWest. Donna served in the Navy for a total of 20 years – 11 years on active duty and 9 years in the Navy Reserves. (Bugle plays)

MS. DONNA HOFFMEIER: Thank you very much. Good afternoon. The teleprompter says "good morning" but I know it's actually afternoon now, so. (Laughter)

The first thing I'd like to say is on behalf of Dave McIntyre, our CEO, he sends his apologies for not being able to join you here today. His 90-year old father, who is an Army, a former Army physician, is ill and has been hospitalized so Dave took an early morning flight today to be with his father in Montana.

However, as a life member of DAV, it is an honor for me to be here on his behalf and on behalf of our leadership team and all employees at TriWest Healthcare Alliance, to welcome you to TriWest's hometown of Phoenix. We are excited to have you here for your DAV national convention.

As you heard, TriWest has supported your annual convention for the past decade. And we've also been an ongoing sponsor of the National Disabled Veteran Winter Sports Clinic – I always just call it the Winter Sports Clinic – and the Veterans Golf Clinic.

I, personally, have attended the Winter Sports Clinic many, many times, and I've seen first-hand the very powerful impact it has on the lives of those who participate so thank you, DAV, for your work with that. It's an amazing event.

Since our founding in 1996, TriWest has been the only company of its kind with one sole purpose that continues today – and that is to serve the health care needs of our nation's military veterans' community.

For 17 years, TriWest administered the Department of Defense TRICARE program in the Western United States. And since 2014 we've been privileged to support the health care needs of veterans through the VA's Community Care program in the 14 western states shown on the map.

In this role, we work with the VA medical centers across our regions to build a network that's tailored to meet their specific needs, and then we work to make sure that network of community providers is paid accurately and timely for the care they deliver to veterans.

This network of providers has delivered to veterans everything from transplants to cancer care, from primary care to health care and then everything in between.

On January 1st, we will be returning to support DoD and the next generation of the TRICARE program in the new and expanded 26-state TRICARE West Region. So if you use TRICARE in the regions on this map, in the area on this map, you will begin to hear more about this transition in the coming months.

Last but certainly not least, I'd like to thank all of DAV staff and members for your service and for what you do for veterans. This quote from former DAV National Commander and World War II veteran Bill Kirby, which is inscribed in the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C., seems fitting for how my colleagues and I at TriWest feel about our privileged mission to "serve those who have served."

"I shall recall with respect those who fought with me and were scarred with bullets, left limbless by bombs. I shall recall with humility those who were stronger and braver than me. And I shall recall with celebration and joy our nation's heritage of selfless sacrifice and commitment to the common good."

In closing, we hope that you have a great time here in Phoenix and that you enjoy the DAV Fun Night Monday night with Gary Sinise and the Lieutenant Dan Band. And we'd also encourage you just to stop by our booth, get to know a little bit more about who we are and what we do to support the military and veteran community.

Thank you, again. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Hoffmeier withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I will now ask our national adjutant to read DAV's Statement of Policy, to list committee advisors whom I have appointed and who received the approval of the National Executive Committee at its most recent meeting, and to make any further announcements.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: "DAV was founded on the principle that this nation's first duty to veterans is the rehabilitation and welfare of its wartime disabled. This principle envisions:

"1. High quality hospital and medical care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans with disabilities incurred in or aggravated by service in America's armed forces.

"2. Adequate compensation for the loss resulting from such service-connected disabilities.

"3. Vocational rehabilitation and/or education to help the disabled veteran prepare for and obtain gainful employment.

"4. Enhanced opportunities for employment and preferential job placement so that the remaining ability of the disabled veteran is used productively.

"5. Adequate compensation to the surviving spouses and dependents of veterans whose deaths are held to be service-connected under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"6. Enhanced outreach to ensure that disabled veterans receive all benefits they have earned and that the American people understand and respect the needs these veterans encounter as a result of their disabilities.

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

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

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

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

I would now like to read into the record National Commander Espinosa's appointed Convention Committee Advisors: for the Committee on Credentials, National Membership Director Doug Wells and National Judge Advocate Mike Dobmeier;

For the Committee on General Resolutions and Membership, Assistant National Legislative Director Marquis Barefield and Assistant National Legislative Director Naomi Mathis;

For the Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights, National Legislative Director Joy Ilem and Deputy National Service Director for Training, Scott Hope;

For the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws, Inspector General Ed Hartman and Past National Commander Rob Reynolds;

For the Committee on Employment, National Employment Director Ryan Burgos and Assistant National Employment Director Jeremy Yost;

For the Committee on Hospital and Voluntary Services, National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst and Assistant National Legislative Director John Retzer; and, lastly,

For the Committee on Nomination of National Officers, Past National Commander Joe Johnston and Executive Director of the Department of Connecticut Al Church.

Advisors can pick up their Committee folders from the Resolutions Office located in the West Building 212A.

I have a few other announcements. I'm going to try to do this quickly.

At 2:00 o'clock this afternoon we will host the Service and Legislative Seminar, in which we'll welcome Ranking Member House Veterans' Affairs Committee Representative Mark Takano, VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal, and VA Under Secretary for Benefits, Josh Jacobs, and Chairman of the Board of Veterans Appeals, Jaime Areizaga-Soto. And those who are interested in attending should be in their seats by 1:45 so that the seminar can begin promptly at 2:00 o'clock. You won't want to miss that important discussion.

Tonight we will be honoring our top elected leader and your service during the National Commander's Reception held in North 120 A-D at 7:30 p.m. Please remember that you will need your credentials in order to gain entry. The convention center folks are not messing around with the credentials, if any of you have run into that.

Beginning this afternoon at 4:15 convention committees are scheduled to meet. Those of you who have been elected to convention committees are asked to be on time in the room assigned for your meeting. We ask that the committees complete their work as soon as possible but thoroughly.

Those who plan to attend the Introduction of National Officers and Dinner on Tuesday evening must RSVP for the gathering. Those who did not RSVP for the officer dinner when pre-registering online must do so onsite at registration no later than tomorrow at 4:00 p.m.

Important note: tickets will not be issued for this event. Instead, an email will be sent by Tuesday morning to attendees who RSVP'd noting their assigned table number and further instructions regarding how to check in at the entrance to the dinner.

For Fun Night on Monday at 8:00 we are thrilled to welcome back our old friend and longtime veteran supporter, Gary Sinise and the Lieutenant Dan Band. (Applause) This year we mark three decades since DAV first recognized Gary following the release of Forrest Gump. And he is eager to celebrate.

Fun Night is once again being presented by our friends at TriWest, as you just heard. And we can't thank TriWest enough for all of their dedicated support and their generosity over the years. They help make this event a success and I know everyone in this room appreciates it.

Check your program or convention app on your phone for more information on the events and links to view and download photos, reports and other content from our convention.

On behalf of the entire DAV and DAV Auxiliary, I'd like to offer my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Caption Call by Sorenson who generously sponsored the closed captioning for this year's national convention.

Our first business session will convene tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. At that time we will hear reports from our headquarters executive directors and our Chairman of the Board of Directors. We will also honor our employers, our VA employees, volunteers and our top recruiters.

On Tuesday morning, as is our usual practice, we'll host a parade of donors. Those who wish to donate to any DAV entity are encouraged, in the interest of time, to fill out the forms in your bags before making your way to our donation space West Exhibit Hall 2 located inside Registration on the lower level.

Every year A&W celebrates National Root Beer Float Day on August 6th. In exchange for a free root beer float, A&W asks their guests to pay it forward. Together with franchise partners they have raised over \$500,000 for DAV since 2013.

Thanks to our great partners at A&W, immediately following our opening session, even though you should be eating lunch, free root beer floats will be made available to you all in the West Exhibit Hall 1, which is located on the lower level. So if you want to go get a start on your lunch by having an A&W float, please go to the lower level. (Laughter)

We are giving away three \$50 gift certificates that can be redeemed at the DAV store online or here during the convention. All registered convention attendees are eligible but must be present to win. And if I call your name and you are in the hall, please see Membership Director Doug Wells up here in front of the stage as soon as we adjourn.

Winner Number 1, Kathy Williams, Georgia Number 50; Vici Brown, Oklahoma, Number 43; and J.W. Jolly, Texas Number 44. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Jesinoski returned to his seat and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Barry. Ladies and gentlemen, if you are able, please rise and I will ask Chaplain Varner Dancer to lead us in a closing prayer.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Almighty Creator, we truly thank you for this space that has been allowed for us today. May we walk away with vision as we, one and another, continue our service to one another. We thank you for the wisdom, knowledge.

We close this part of our session with gratitude and thanksgiving and until we meet again we surrender our hearts to our fellow veterans, their families and our friends abroad. In these and all things we give thanks. And the people said Amen.

(Response of "Amen.")

(Whereupon, the chaplain withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: This convention stands in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed at 12:32 o'clock, p.m. on Saturday, August 3, 2024.)

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FIRST BUSINESS SESSION

August 4, 2024

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The First Business Session of the Disabled American Veterans 102nd National Convention convened in the convened in Room West 301B through D of the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on Sunday morning, August 4, 2024, and was called to order at 9:00 o'clock, a.m., by National Commander Nancy G. Espinosa.

COMMANDER NANCY G. ESPINOSA: Good morning.

("Response of "Good morning.")

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: The convention will please come to order. As a reminder, I would like to ask everyone to please silence your cell phones and portable electronic devices. (Three raps of the gavel) Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. Hand salute.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Two. I will ask Chaplain Debra Varner Dancer to lead us in pray as we prepare to undertake this morning's business.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN DEBRA VARNER DANCER: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Our Father, once again we come to this place with thanksgiving. This space of business being achieved and accomplished with your wisdom, your guidance, and your instruction. Help us as one to celebrate those who shall be awarded today for all their great achievements, meeting their goals, and being great overcomers.

We thank you for your presence. We thank you for those who come far and near just to celebrate this great occasion. We ask all of this in your name. And the people said Amen.

(Response of "Amen," and the chaplain withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium and gave one rap of the gavel.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: In order for a delegate to be heard at this convention you must first be recognized by the chair. Only those delegates at the microphone will be recognized. They must state their name, chapter number and the state they represent.

Comrades, the convention rules are a continuing part of our Bylaws. They are part and parcel of Article 3 and remain in effect continually. They are subject to amendment as provided in the Bylaws and do not require re-adoption.

I would like to call on Chairman Brenda Reed for the Credentials Committee report.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Credentials Committee chair advanced to the podium.)

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON BRENDA REED: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON REED: I actually know what state I'm in this year.

(Laughter) The Credentials Committee met in Room 105 of the Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 3rd, 2024, at 1:13 p.m.

The roll call – oh, I'm sorry. Excuse me. The National Convention Credentials Committee was called to order by Committee Advisor Michael Dobmeier and Doug Wells. The first order of business was to elect a chairperson and a secretary.

I, Brenda Reed, Department of Florida, District 7, was elected to serve as chairperson. Cali Mullins, Department of Washington, District 19, was elected to serve as secretary.

The roll call showed 993 delegates and 49 alternates have registered, which includes 42 departments and 343 chapters registered. There are 9 national officers, 21 National Executive Committeemen, and 15 past national commanders currently registered, for a total of 45 votes. The total vote count is 7,531.

This partial report is for informational purposes only and it reflects the registration at the close of business at 6:00 p.m. on August 3rd, 2024.

This completes the partial report of the Credentials Committee, Commander.

(Whereupon, the Credentials Committee chair withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Brenda. At this time I would also like to introduce and recognize National Chief-of-Staff Floyd Watson; Officer-of-the-Day Jim Patten, and Sergeant-at-Arms Thomas Ayala. Thank you for your support as it has made my job easier. (Applause)

It's now my honor and pleasure to introduce the executive director of DAV's Washington headquarters, Randy Reese.

A native of Bristol, Virginia, Randy enlisted in the Army in 1984 and served as a rifle squad leader in the 82nd Airborne Division during the Persian Gulf War.

Returning stateside, Randy served as an elite "Black-Hat" instructor in the Air Movement Operations and Jump Master Courses at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It was there he suffered a disabling back injury while conducting a nighttime parachute jump. He separated from the Army in 1995.

Randy went on to earn his paralegal degree from Kaplan College for Professional Studies and is a nationally-recognized expert on veterans benefits and services since he joined DAV as a national service officer the year of his discharge.

In December 2018 Randy was appointed executive director of DAV's National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he serves as DAV's principal spokesperson before Congress, the White House, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

In this role he continues to lead our advocacy efforts in Washington as others have before him, keeping us at the forefront of the fight on Capitol Hill for veterans' rights.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a warm welcome for our executive director of DAV's Washington Headquarters, Randy Reese. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the executive director of Washington Headquarters advanced to the podium.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS EDWARD "RANDY" REESE: National Commander Espinosa, National Adjutant Jesinoski, distinguished guests and delegates, it is my distinct pleasure to be here with you today to report on the activities of DAV's national service and legislative programs over this past year.

Since we last convened in Atlantic City, DAV has had another year of accomplishments. In true DAV fashion, we never wavered from advocating for and securing vital benefits and health care for veterans, their families, and survivors, regardless of the political climate that we find ourselves in.

Speaking of climate, it's great to be here in Phoenix (Laughter) a city that enjoys four seasons: tolerable, hot, really hot, and, are you kidding me. (Laughter) I'm pretty sure we're in the "are you kidding me" season.

If I've learned one thing about Phoenix so far, it's the value of air conditioning, or refrigeration, as the locals call it.

You know it's hot in Phoenix when the cold water faucet is hotter than the hot, when jalapeno peppers are used for cooling, and when your bread gets toasted on the drive home. (Laughter) Hot.

But as hot as it is here today, how many of you remember what happened on another hot August 2nd day, 34 years ago? That's right, it was the day Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait to start the Persian Gulf War, a day that forever changed my life, and so many of yours.

In just days after the invasion I was at Fort Bragg, and within a week I was on my way to Saudi Arabia as a part of the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade. So as much as I appreciate when people say, "It's a dry heat in Phoenix," (Laughter) nothing will ever compare to the heat experienced in the Persian Gulf sandbox that summer. (Applause)

That war was a major milestone on my journey from serving in the Army to serving my fellow disabled veterans in DAV.

Commander, I'm proud to be part of the preeminent veterans' service organization, and I'm pleased to share some highlights of what we accomplished over the past year, starting with our national service program.

Each year, DAV helps hundreds of thousands of veterans who seek benefits they've earned.

With more than 3,600 service officers, including national, transition, department and chapter service officers, DAV counseled over 300,000 veterans just last year, filing over 200,000 new benefit claims. In total, our service officers took nearly three million actions to assist veterans, their families and survivors just over this past year.

And because of that work they do, and the trust that they've gained, DAV now holds power of attorney for approximately 1.1 million veterans, and with our help they received \$28.4 billion in benefits just last year. (Applause)

And for those who have their claims denied, DAV is there to help them every step of the way from filing appeals to securing representation all the way up to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

No matter what or when you served, our benefit advocates stand ready to help veterans and their families navigate these complex waters, and we do so at no charge to the veteran ever.

We go out into the communities around the country to educate veterans and their families about how DAV can help them get their VA benefits and make them aware of other life-changing and, sometimes, lifesaving services that we offer.

Last year we held over 400 information seminars that drew in more than 17,000 attendees, and like all of these services we offer, these were free of charge.

And we continue to invest in our training and education for our national service offices who work on the front lines.

We're making a \$500,000 investment in new technology and laptops so that every DAV national service officer is able to conduct mobile outreach and submit electronic claims from virtually anywhere they are. When it comes to serving America's veterans, wherever they are, DAV is and will remain second to none. (Applause)

At DAV helping comes naturally. It isn't a question of "why should we do it." It's "how can we do it." When natural disasters strike, that's exactly how we operate. No matter what Mother Nature throws our way, DAV stands ready to be a light in perhaps one of the darkest moments in a veteran's life.

Just last year, DAV provided nearly \$900,000 to veterans in Texas, California, North Carolina, Iowa, South Dakota, and other regions of the country impacted by fires, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. These efforts will never waiver. And I'm proud to say that since 1968 DAV has disbursed over \$20 million in disaster relief funds. (Applause)

We continue living up to the eternal words of Abraham Lincoln, "to care for all who shall have born the battle." That's truly what we're doing with the DAV Caregiver Support. We launched this initiative last year, offering tailored support and resources to friends, family members, and loved ones who selflessly serve as veteran caregivers.

In just the first few months we've already helped hundreds of veterans, helped hundreds of caregivers by connecting them to the resources that can make their lives easier, reduce their stress, empower them to keep veterans in their homes longer. DAV is committed to finding innovative ways to support these women and men who are truly America's unsung heroes. (Applause)

As you've heard me say a couple of times, every DAV service is offered free of charge. And I can tell you that will never change. But the recent explosion of new VA benefits available to veterans, thanks in part to the PACT Act, has created an unfortunate opportunity for so-called "claims sharks."

These people and organizations are circling veterans, looking to charge hefty fees for helping file VA benefit claims. They don't view veterans as worthy individuals who earned these benefits through their service and sacrifice; they view us as "cash cows."

No veteran should risk receiving wrong or even fraudulent information when seeking the benefits they are entitled to. It's not just wrong morally, it's illegal. If you ask me, that's some bull shark. I could say another word. (Applause) That's why DAV supports the GUARD VA Benefits Act which would impose criminal penalties for "claims sharks." Together, let's make "claims sharks" an endangered species. (Applause)

This August also marks another anniversary of note for DAV. It was 30 years ago that the movie *Forest Gump* was released, featuring Tom Hanks and our friend, Gary Sinise.

For those who haven't seen it – there is really no excuse – perhaps the most famous line from that movie is, "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're going to get."

But the line I think of most often when I'm at work in D.C. is from when *Forest Gump* quotes his mother as saying that, and you know it, "Stupid is as stupid does." Which brings me to Congress. (Laughter)

Despite attempts to cool down the partisan rhetoric and end the gridlock in Congress after the horrifying shooting in Pennsylvania last month, legislation to strengthen veterans' health care and benefits continues to face historic obstacles due to political polarization and dysfunction.

In fact, political scientists almost universally consider the current 118th Congress to be one of the least productive in our nation's history. (Boo)

Since last January, Congress has approved 67 bills that were signed into law out of 14,000 that were introduced. That's the total lowest number since at least World War II, if not the lowest ever.

Even if they can double that number by the end of the year, the final total will still be less than 25 percent of just the average number of laws approved by Congress over the past 80 years.

But no matter what the odds or obstacles, the DAV team is relentless in our pursuit of our goals.

Since the start of the 118th Congress, the DAV legislative team has held more than 550 meetings with VA leaders, members of Congress, and their staffs on important legislation and policies being considered.

Our legislative team has participated in over 50 congressional hearings and roundtables to promote DAV's critical policy goals. And perhaps most important, through our Commander's Action Network, the DAV CAN, you and your fellow members have sent out more than 1.1 million emails to Capitol Hill offices. (Applause)

So we can all be proud that team DAV has been doing our job. And I know that I can count on you in the weeks and months ahead to help us push some important legislative priorities over the finish line.

For more than a year now, DAV and a broad coalition of veterans' organizations have been working to enact the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act.

This bill was the culmination of more than a year's work and includes important new policies from dozens of bills introduced in Congress last year, everything from expanding VA access to long-term care options, to supporting family caregivers, to extending dental care coverage for more veterans, helping end veteran homelessness, to improving veterans' education benefits for their survivors, and so much more.

Many of you have already talked to your representatives and called your Senators, or emailed your members of Congress about this critical legislation. And we will be asking you to do it again in the coming weeks.

We must not, and with your help we will not, allow Congress to finish this year without passing the Dole Act. (Applause)

You may also have heard the recent news that VA announced it has a serious budget shortfall this year and next, and unless Congress provides more dollars they might be forced to delay the delivery of benefit checks for disability compensation, dependency indemnity compensation, and other benefit checks this fall.

Rest assured that we have been and will continue to work with Secretary McDonough and leaders in Congress to ensure this doesn't happen. We're also working with the House and Senate to increase funding for VA health care next year. Due to the success of the PACT Act, which was signed into law almost exactly two years ago, hundreds of thousands of veterans are eligible for new benefits and health care due to their toxic exposures. And that's good news.

The bad news is that VA and Congress didn't put enough funding into the budget to pay for it. So, once again, we'll need your voices to make certain that the Administration and Congress fully fund the VA health care system. Every eligible veteran deserves access to high-quality care, whenever and wherever they need it. (Applause)

With women being the fastest-growing group of veterans, we must continue to ensure that VA remains accessible and safe with tailored resources to meet their needs.

Earlier this year DAV published the latest women veterans' report entitled, Women Veterans: The Journey to Mental Wellness. We presented our findings from the report at a Capitol Hill briefing in February where some of these brave women veterans came forward with their stories of injury, betrayal, courage, and hope.

(Whereupon, a video on Women Veterans Report was viewed.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS REESE: This landmark report, DAV's third, is the first to address focus on the staggering rate of suicide among women veterans. Between 2020 and 2021, the suicide rate rose 24 percent.

All suicide is tragic, but as the report finds, women are twice as likely to attempt suicide than male veteran counterparts. And more than half suicide deaths amongst women veterans involve firearms. If these figures jump off the page, they should. No one should be comfortable seeing these alarming statistics.

You can read about DAV's 50 policy recommendations to reduce this wicked scourge at Women Veterans-dot-org.

As we did with our prior women veterans' report, DAV is actively working with VA and Congress to get these recommendations adopted. And I'm confident that with your help we can and will continue to make the difference in saving lives. (Applause)

Disability rights activist Helen Keller once said that, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision." Well, next week DAV will be publicly releasing our "Vision for Veterans" for the 119th Congress.

It's a compilation of bold policy proposals that would significantly improve the delivery of health care and benefits for veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. If you attended the Benefit Protection Team Leader workshop on Friday, you already had a preview.

We're going to need everyone here today, and all of your fellow DAV members and supporters back home, to share our vision with the members of Congress candidates and those who are running to replace them in November's election and those who are secure in their seats.

Our goal is to get them to sign pledges of support for each of our seven Vision for Veterans proposals. And then next year we, and you, will hold their feet to the fire to support legislation to implement our Vision for Veterans.

Here is what we're proposing. First, do not reduce, offset, or tax veterans' disability compensation ever. (Applause)

Next, comprehensively reform, strengthen, and increase Dependents Indemnity Compensation for survivors of disabled veterans. (Applause)

Next, we believe that dental care is health care and it's long overdue for VA to provide it to all service disabled veterans. (Applause)

It's also time for VA to offer assisted living as a new long-term care option for service disabled veterans who can no longer live independently at home. (Applause)

With budget challenges every day we're asking Congress to establish a permanent reserve fund to guarantee we have VA hospitals and clinics when veterans need them and where veterans need them. (Applause)

My personal pet peeve: Congress must end PAYGO, a ridiculous rule that requires new veterans' benefits to be "paid for" by cuts to existing benefits. No more balancing the budget off the backs of disabled veterans. (Applause)

And, finally, we are calling for a comprehensive reform of the toxic exposure laws and policies so that no veteran has to wait decades to get their benefits ever again. (Applause)

In that regard, I'm pleased to announce that in September, DAV, working together with our colleagues at the Military Officers Association of America, MOAA, will be releasing a landmark report called: Ending the Wait for Toxic Exposed Veterans.

This carefully researched report includes comprehensive findings and recommendations that, if enacted, could significantly shorten the time it takes veterans exposed to toxic substances to get the care and benefits they've earned.

While the PACT Act took care of most veterans harmed by burn pits, it did not cover all known military toxic exposures today, and it didn't establish a new process to shorten the time veterans have to wait in the future.

We found that, on average, it took more than 36 years for VA to formally recognize and compensate veterans injured by toxic substances, such as Agent Orange and burn pits.

Never again should we allow America's heroes to suffer in silence for decades due to harms incurred in service to our nation. (Applause)

There's a famous quote from George Santana or Santayana – however you say the name – "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." But today I'm reminded of an expression that's often credited to author and humorist Mark Twain, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes."

Picture this, 50 years ago, 1974, and the following years, were the period of turmoil, very much like we're experiencing today. Back then a long protracted war finally ended. There were major political scandals. One president resigned and the next one survived not one but two assassination attempts. Inflation in the nation was over 11 percent.

It was a tense and too often a violent time, one that took leadership, patience, and wisdom to navigate through. But we can't always count on our political leaders to get us through.

As in the past, I believe it's going to take the steady hand of veterans to show the way forward.

By remaining steadfast in our purpose, united in our plans, and tireless in our efforts, I am confident that DAV will continue to do our part in setting an example for all.

And working together, we will continue to achieve more victories for veterans, and the nation, in the years ahead. (Applause)

May God bless DAV in these efforts and the men and women who defended the United States of America. (Standing Ovation) Thank you, everybody.

Commander that concludes my report and I ask for adoption by the Convention.

(Whereupon, the Executive Director Reese withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Randy. May I have a motion to accept Mr. Reese's report?

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Mic 2.

MR. ALBERT LABELLE: Mic 3.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 3.

MR. LABELLE: Al Labelle, Chapter 57, Department of Wisconsin, makes a motion to accept the excellent report presented by Washington Executive Director Randy Reese.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I have a motion. May I have a second?

MR. TIMOTHY WALSH: Mic 4.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 4.

MR. WALSH: Tim Walsh, Chapter 1, Department of South Dakota, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. The motion carried.

(Applause)

And now it is now my great pleasure to introduce or reintroduce to many of you a fantastic veteran who is going very far in this organization. Cody VanBoxel is a Marine of the Iraq War. He was appointed Executive Director of DAV's National Headquarters in Erlanger, Kentucky, in June 2023. His office is located in a facility he played a key role in seeing come to fruition from design to completion.

Cody oversees employment initiatives, voluntary services, fundraising, accounting, membership activities, administration, information technology, communications, outreach, human resources, facilities, and logistics critical to DAV's mission of support for the disabled veterans and their families.

Cody was appointed to assistant executive director in 2021. In that capacity he was instrumental in the acquisition of DAV Patriot Boot Camp, among other important initiatives.

In 2017, Cody was appointed to the position of national human resources director, where his responsibilities included advising the executive director and providing executive oversight for the company's human resource initiatives.

He began his career as a national service officer apprentice at the National Service Office in Washington, D.C., in 2011, before transferring to Philadelphia, an office he ultimately supervised.

A native of Hamden, Ohio, Cody served his country as an electronics technician and then a Marine security guard, serving in West Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia. He spent nearly all of 2007 on duty in Iraq providing specialized security to Department of State and Multi-National Forces.

After his discharge in January 2009, he attended Western Governors University, earning a bachelor's of science degree in business management. He is also a Society of Human Resources Management Senior Certified Professional.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to your DAV National Headquarters Executive Director Cody VanBoxel. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Executive Director National Headquarters VanBoxel advanced to the podium.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS B. CODY VANBOXEL: All right. O-H. (Cheers) There it is.

All right, thank you, Commander, for your introduction and leadership over a very eventful term at DAV's helm. And thank all of you for coming.

As an organization of people who share common experiences, tell me if this story resonates with you. A new general arrives on base to take over as commander. As she tours her new home she sees two young Marines guarding an obscure bench under a shade tree. When asked what they were doing, they tell her their vigil is part of a long-standing base tradition but they aren't sure what's behind the tradition.

She asks the outgoing commander about it and he tells her he has no idea when or why the bench became a duty assignment, but he wasn't going to be the one to mess with tradition.

So, she calls the commander before that and the commander before that, and the commander before that. No one knew. Finally, she reached out to a sergeant major who had been stationed at the base 20 years prior.

She asks him, "Sergeant major, we've had two Marines on permanent detail guarding an obscure bench near the parade deck for as long as anyone can remember. Do you know why?"

The sergeant major was shocked. "Ma'am," he said, "are you telling me that paint is still wet?" (Laughter)

DAV is not an organization that does things simply because that's the way they've always been done. (Applause) Thank you. That mindset is imprinted on everyone on team DAV, from our national adjutant town, and it's part of our daily approach.

And that's important because the terrain that we operate in as a charity is continuously changing. The need to advance and evolve is constant. Not only that, the needs of the veterans we serve and the ways we engage the public to support our cause are ever changing.

It's been said that even within a single family, every child grows up in a different home. Similarly, everyone who joins the military – even those in the same fighting hole – has a unique experience.

I spent almost all of 2007 in Iraq as a Marine security guard. Our task was to protect our nation's personnel and secrets. From one of Saddam's former palaces we faced regular attacks. We reacted to the threat of suicide bombers and took incoming fire. Lives were lost while I was there.

And through the intelligence we protected, we were intimately familiar with the evil that was being committed beyond our zone of control. Some of that evil was all too familiar to a revered DAV leader who was serving at around that same time in Iraq.

Our own past National Commander Stephen "Butch" Whitehead was operating out of Convoy Support Center Scania when he helped capture a high-value target named Ali Turki Jasoom. Caught with a rare find, a mortar sight, he was a bad guy who could have been much more effective than the average jihadist at attacking American interests and personnel.

And that would have been of considerable concern to DAV's Dan Clare, who is today our chief communications and outreach officer. He was, at around that same time, choking on burn pits at Balad, also known as mortar-ittaville.

Though each served along a 200-click stretch of Route Tampa, our experiences in that theater are very different. And they're even harder to compare to DAV's assistant legislative director Naomi Mathis, who lost an Airman she felt was like a brother to her. Staff Sergeant Patrick L. Griffen Jr. died in an attack along the same route a few years before.

Naomi was a single mother when she enlisted in the Air Force and endured three deployments apart from her children. After that, she transitioned out of the service to a VA less than prepared to meet her needs as a woman veteran.

Comparisons in conflicts or eras are rarely productive. Just ask anyone who served in the infantry in Vietnam. Though most of their combat tours lasted one year, compared to those who fought in the Pacific for the duration of the war, the mobility of helicopters made it possible for them to experience six times as many days in actual combat in the course of a year.

So, before you make a comparison, ask Don Inns about Beirut. Or Rob Reynolds about the joys that come with jumping out of perfectly good airplanes. Or Dick Marbes about how it is to live 65 years without a leg because of an illness in service.

Or Delphine Metcalf-Foster who slept her first two weeks in Saudi Arabia in a body bag for warmth before she and her fellow soldiers had to begin filling them. Or anyone who drank water at Camp Lejeune. Or who is a survivor of MST. Or who were injured so severely in training that their military careers were cut short.

DAV must honor them all, not with a broad brush, but in recognition of the sacrifices each made individually in uniform. If we harken to a specific era, we should do so without prejudice or preconceived notions. We cannot and should not ignore the adversity that comes with service, regardless of how anyone is changed in uniform.

But we also must make every effort to understand the experiences of the veterans who serve of all eras, including those called to intrepid duty in extremely perilous situations.

This year we mark two decades since the second battle of Fallujah. There, our own faced the heaviest urban combat we'd seen since Hue City, which is its own battle with its own unique lore.

Few among the living, myself included, can grasp the chaos and insanity that so many faced over those six weeks in the winter of 2004. But the courage they showed and the violence they endured demand our remembrance. Just ask DAV member Aubrey McDade.

On his second deployment, when pinned down and with two of his Marines wounded in a firefight, Aubrey heroically and selflessly charged to the front of his squad to take on an enemy who was determined to die.

Because of his actions, two Marines who would otherwise have died were saved. And the remains of Corporal Nathan Anderson, who gave his life, were recovered.

(Whereupon, a video interview with Aubrey McDade was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS VANBOXEL: Aubrey received the Navy Cross for putting himself in harm's way to save his brothers. You can learn more about the anniversary of Fallujah through the exhibit hall in Hall 2 on the lower level and in an upcoming special multimedia feature on the battle and those forever changed there. And Aubrey will be joining a guided discussion about the battle this evening at 6:30 in the West 207 lecture hall.

He embodies the concept that we, as individuals and as an organization, must never leave our own behind. (Applause) To do that, to live up to our charge as the organization that ensures promises are kept to veterans, we must take a global view on how we execute our mission and meet veterans where they are. We must do the same with our volunteers and donors.

This year, we held our first national Community Impact Day. The thought behind the project was to set aside a day to engage our members and reemphasize the importance of DAV volunteerism.

Fortunately for us, when he's not capturing high-value targets in combat, past National Commander Butch Whitehead is one of the people leading volunteer initiatives.

(Whereupon, a video on Community Impact Day was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS VANBOXEL: Volunteerism is just one way we can customize our efforts to ensure the unique needs of veterans are met. But it's also one of the areas where, as DAV leaders, we can make a significant impact by simply asking people we know to help out.

We always need drivers and folks in hospitals to augment the care VA provides. And we're getting very creative in how we leverage local media to help recruit in that area.

But, beyond our next Community Impact Day in April, during National Volunteer Month, we should look at the Local Veterans Assistance Program as a cure-all for leveraging the unique abilities of interested volunteers and fulfilling special needs that would otherwise go unmet.

Barry spoke yesterday about membership. And I don't need to belabor any of the points he made. But I do want you to know that we're doing more and applying more strategy than ever before in our history to recruiting people to join our ranks. We're doing more to provide resources for recruiters and incentives for people to join.

But if you're not tuning in and sharing the great information we're putting out there, if you're not aware of tangible and intangible benefits of joining DAV, your fellow veterans need you to sharpen up. To help, we've created something special that will give you the confidence and tools you need.

(Whereupon, a video on DAV Recruiting Resource was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS VANBOXEL: That resource and many more are available in the "member resources" section of our newly-enhanced website. But if that's not enough, as many of you know, we have an exciting new incentive that could literally win you millions of dollars.

(Whereupon, the video DAV Recruiter Rally was viewed.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS VANBOXEL: Now, I know what you're thinking. I said, "millions of dollars." And then the video stated that the winner will receive \$2,500 and a trip for two to Las Vegas. Well, this contest will give you almost a full year to cash out all your change jars and pool your money.

The millions you could win is then up to you and your luck at the casinos. (Laughter) I suggest you put it all on red and let it ride. (Laughter) However you bet, DAV can't, unfortunately, cover any losses or the taxes on any winnings. But that's still one great reason you should go out and recruit.

DAV is constantly looking at ways we can connect with the veteran community. In addition to our increasing engagement across all major social networks, DAV expanded outreach to an area that our founders never could have foreseen.

DAV is now using the interactive livestreaming channel Twitch to reach gamers and people who use the channel for entertainment, sports and music. We are meeting veterans those who support us where they are.

DAV on Twitch will give veterans an opportunity to engage with our organization from their living rooms. We can answer their questions, direct them to resources, or recruit them to join, volunteer, or even participate in legislative advocacy.

We continue to build and enhance relationships with the media. And our partnership with the UFC and other companies should make it easier for our chapters and departments to activate locally.

The only strange thing about having DAV's name on the mat is that it changes the way you experience the sport. Instead of cheering on a fighter, I find myself hoping that whoever ends up getting pounded out on the mat does so near, but not covering, DAV signage. (Laughter)

We'll be producing new public service announcements this year. The donated inventory we receive year-in and year-out over the past decade has achieved nearly 80 billion impressions at a value of nearly \$850 million. That is almost \$1 billion in free air time.

This year, we conclude three years leading DAV Patriot Boot Camp. That is another program that truly meets veterans where they are and empowers them to succeed as entrepreneurs. I hope many of you were able to experience a taste of that program with the Patriots Pitch Contest Friday night.

That program is going to continue to change many, many lives in ways that are truly awe inspiring. It goes well beyond teaching a veteran "how to fish," as the saying goes.

Through DAV Patriot Boot Camp, veterans are teaching other veterans and creating a community of support so our founders can succeed on an entirely new plane. Where most veterans surrendered their prime entrepreneurial years in order to serve, DAV is giving them the tools and networks they need to make the world of business accessible to them.

Not only are they creating jobs, they're coming back to DAV to find out how they can give back and hire more veterans. Speaking of employment, DAV career fairs continue to empower. In addition to providing a direct conduit to veteran-friendly companies, DAV is doing more than ever before to create content and advise veterans on how to succeed in their careers.

We're working with the for-profit sector to educate employers to not just hire veterans but to support their growth and retention. We're thinking out of the box and opening our charity to experts who want to improve the lives of the people we serve.

Our own past National Commander Dave Riley, a quadruple amputee, participated in Johns Hopkins University's Multidisciplinary Design program. Working with students who will be some of the top engineers of their generation, Dave collaborated to help with the design of waterproof prosthetics with the hope that it would enable arm amputees to perform basic hygiene procedures autonomously.

In addition to the prosthesis, which they named "Ramara," an integrated and self-contained bath system called the "barrel solution" was proposed, which would provide sponges for cleaning, rinsing and air drying.

And anyone who knows Yvonne Riley can agree that, while Dave benefits from increased independence, she would get the respite of a peaceful cup of coffee while he's in the Dave Washer. (Laughter)

Although these contraptions might not be as practical and useful as Dave would probably like, this is one small part of a continuous path of innovation and expansion in the services we offer and the way we conduct our business.

And I want to thank you, our member leaders, for making DAV an experience in your communities and for your flexibility and innovation in creating solutions for veterans where you live.

It's hard to believe we're marking 20 years since some of the heaviest fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. And it's impossible to calculate the full toll those and previous eras of wartime service have had on our community, whose members have shouldered the cost of our nation's liberty.

With the support of so many DAV chapters and departments, our adaptive sports programs are one of the most inspirational occasions in which we can see our community come together. At the winter sports clinic, we recognized a special veteran whose participation was emblematic of the spirit of that event.

(Whereupon, a video of Erik Castillo was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS VANBOXEL: Erik Castillo paid a tremendous price while defending our way of life. This year he marks his 20th alive day. And while his story showcases the resilience and potential of veterans in our community, he also reminds us of the foundation we stand upon as inheritors of DA's legacy.

From the equipment he uses in the video to the health care system he relies on for rehabilitation, and on into the benefits he has earned and the life he's able to lead decades after sacrificing so much for our nation, all of this is possible because we, as a band of brothers and sisters, have fought for more than 100 years to ensure our own are not left behind. (Applause)

I mentioned before that making comparisons in eras is difficult. But in this case I want to make a special shout out to the veterans of a particular era who gave my generation the welcome home that they, themselves, never received.

If you're a Vietnam War era veteran, and you are able, will you please stand up or raise your hand and remain standing for just a moment?

(Whereupon, the Vietnam War era veterans were recognized with a robust round of applause.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS VANBOXEL: The vast expansion of opportunities and benefits, and the public's consciousness of its relationship to veterans, owes a huge debt of gratitude to all of you.

It wasn't that long ago that I returned home, dusty, tired and dirty. I vividly recall the group of Vietnam era veterans that met our plane in Atlanta and welcomed me home.

Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for helping everyone here achieve a larger measure of success than at any time in our nation's history.

Madam Commander, this concludes my report and I humbly yield any remaining applause to those that were just standing and welcome them home. (Applause)

(Whereupon, executive director of national headquarters withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Cody, for that outstanding report.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: May I have a motion to accept Mr. VanBoxel's report?

MR. JOSEPH KAUFFMAN: Mic 1.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 1.

MR. KAUFFMAN: Madam Commander, Joe Kauffman, Chapter 113, Pennsylvania, I make the motion to accept that report as read.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I have a motion. May I have a second.

MR. DANNY OLIVER: Mic 3.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 3.

MR. OLIVER: Danny Oliver, Chapter 88, Department of Oklahoma, I want to say welcome home and I second your report, sir. (Applause)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. The motion is carried. (Applause)

(Whereupon, executive director of national headquarters withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Once again, this year's Arthur H. and Mary E. Wilson Award for Top Venture Impacting Veterans will be awarded to a veteran-owned operation that performed exceptionally well at a recent Veteran Entrepreneurship Success Summit in Washington, D.C.

The summit was hosted by Syracuse University's D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families. IVMF's purpose mirrors DAV's mission of empowering veterans to live high-quality lives with respect and dignity.

Sharing in that same mission, DAV has proudly supported this competition by offering a financial award for the specialty category of Top Venture Impacting Veterans, which is made possible by a contribution and ongoing commitment from one of the organization's true friends, Rich Fenstermacher, who was instrumental in helping to erect the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

This award recognizes disabled veterans who have taken on the challenge of starting a business that enhances lives in the veteran community.

Our recipient is Joe Smarro of Solution Point Plus in San Antonio, Texas. (Applause) Joe and his partner, Jesse Trevino, are former Marines (Bugle plays) who founded Solution Point Plus to cultivate mental wellness, maximize human capital, and promote safety by providing crisis intervention training.

First responders, many of whom are veterans, are provided with the resources they need to de-escalate potentially dangerous situations and better serve communities nationwide.

Let's take a closer look at this incredible company that was featured in the HBO documentary Ernie and Joe, Crisis Cops.

(Whereupon, a video on Solution Point Plus was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to the stage Jesse Trevino and his business partner with Solution Point Plus and our scholarship recipient Joe Smarro.

(Whereupon, Mr. Trevino and Mr. Smarro advanced to the stage, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

MR. JOE SMARRO: Ladies and gentlemen, fellow veterans, good morning and thank you. It is both a privilege and an honor to stand before you today on behalf of Solution Point Plus, not only as its CEO but as proud veteran. We are deeply grateful to Disabled American Veterans of this recognition and for the generous award of \$10,000.

Solution Point Plus is a testament to the belief that the values learned in military service of honor, courage, and commitment, can powerfully translate into empowering our communities.

As combat veterans of the Marine Corps and former police officers, Jesse Trevino and I founded Solution Point Plus in 2017 with a clear mission: to bridge the critical gap between behavioral health and criminal justice systems, while attempting to eradicate suicide amongst all first responders.

We specialize in providing comprehensive mental health and de-escalation training to first responders across the nation. Our expertise is in de-escalation and our passion is in self-care, wellness and resiliency.

Roughly 25 percent of police officers in America are military veterans. And we, as a company, are proud to report that 50 percent of our staff are veterans, to include one Gold Star mother. (Applause)

Our goal is simple yet ambitious: to ensure that every encounter between a first responder and a community member is handled with empathy and respect. This award not only bolsters our resources but reaffirms our resolve to expand our impact.

To the DAV, thank you for your unwavering support of veteran-owned businesses and for recognizing the potential in our mission. To my team at Solution Point Plus, your dedication and passion are the backbone of our success.

And to all of you here today, your support empowers us to continue our vital work. Together we are building a legacy of service and personal transformation that honors the best of our nation's values.

Thank you. I love you. And be well. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Trevino and Mr. Smarro withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Each year DAV recognizes companies that go above and beyond to recruit, hire and invest in veterans. These companies understand how veterans contribute to a company's success and culture and are critical in our mission to ensuring veterans can lead fulfilling lives after service.

I'll invite National Employment Director Ryan Burgos to the stage.

(Whereupon, Mr. Burgos joined the commander on the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: It is my pleasure to announce the DAV Patriot Employer of the Year Awards for three outstanding organizations.

The 2024 DAV Small Patriot Employer of the Year Award goes to Arlinghaus Plumbing, Heating, and Air Conditioning, located in DAV national headquarters' backyard. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Arlinghaus' Human Resources Manager Amber Smith to the stage. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Smith advanced to the stage to receive the award, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

MR. JOHN "ROB" LEWIS: Arlinghaus Plumbing, Heating, and Air Conditioning is a family-owned and operated company just outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, where DAV was founded.

Arlinghaus attends DAV job fairs and partners with several organizations that help connect veterans with meaningful employment and resources.

As Arlinghaus grows to a second location in Ohio, it is dedicated to hiring even more veterans and investing in their success. The company offers a paid apprenticeship program for those with no civilian trade experience, and makes it a point to recognize and celebrate military service in the workplace.

MS. AMBER SMITH: Good morning, everybody, how are we doing today?

(Response of "Good morning.")

MS. SMITH: Awesome. On behalf of Arlinghaus Plumbing, Heating, and Air Conditioning, I would like to accept this award and extend our heartfelt thank you to the DAV for this honor.

As an employer we understand that veterans share our core values of teamwork, integrity and service. It is our pleasure and honor to not only accept this award but to continue to be an employer for veterans in our area.

Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Smith withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Amber, for all you and your company do to support veterans. Our 2024 DAV Midsize Patriot Employer of the Year goes to Virginia-based management consulting firm Aptive. Please welcome to the stage Aptive's Director of People Operations Amelia Poling.

(Whereupon, Ms. Poling advanced to the stage to receive the award, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

MR. LEWIS: Aptive is a service-disabled and woman veteran-owned small business that supports innovative programs across the federal government. More than half of its consulting contracts originate with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Impressively, around 20 percent of Aptive's employees are veterans, National Guard, Reserve, and active-duty service members. The company's vets hiring program includes veteran recruiters, relocation stipends, and transition-related training opportunities.

Once hired, veterans can also take advantage of the Aptive Warriors employee resource group and a battle buddy mentorship program.

MS. AMELIA POLING: Good morning, DAV. It is an incredible honor to stand before you and accept this award on behalf of Aptive. I want to extend our deepest gratitude to DAV for recognizing our efforts in recruiting and hiring veterans and honoring their military service.

At Aptive, like many of you, we are committed or we believe that veterans bring unique skills and experience to the workforce. Their contributions are invaluable. And we are committed to continuing to provide an inclusive space where they can thrive.

This award is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our entire team. I am proud of Aptive's initiatives to support our veterans, employees, our clients, and community.

Thank you, again, to DAV. We are deeply grateful for this recognition and look forward to continuing to support veterans across our great nation. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Poling withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Let's give another round of applause for Amelia and her awesome team members at Aptive. (Applause)

The 2024 DAV Large Patriot Employer of the Year is a Blue Halo LLC, a Virginia-based government defense contractor.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Blue Halo Deputy Director and second-in-command Danny Knowles to accept the DAV Large Patriot Employer of the Year Award. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Knowles advanced to the stage to accept the award, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

MR. LEWIS: Blue Halo's mission is to transform the future of global defense, offering industry-leading capabilities in space, electronic warfare, artificial intelligence and much more.

In service to its mission to provide the best, most cutting-edge solutions, Blue Halo recognizes the value and integrity that veterans, transitioning service members, and spouses bring to the workplace. More than 1,300 Blue Halo employees identify as veterans and the company strives to hire 50 veterans each year.

Blue Halo partners with numerous veteran-centric programs, including the Department of Defense SkillBridge Internship Program, and offers mentoring tailored to the veteran's military experience and career goals.

MR. DANNY KNOWLES: Good morning, everyone.

(Response of "Good morning.")

MR. KNOWLES: Good. Hope everyone is doing okay out there. It's kind of bright so I can't see much. I really appreciate DAV for this award for Blue Halo. We really put a lot of effort into our veterans that are working for us.

And if it wasn't for the veterans, we could not accomplish the things that we do today, in my opinion. I am a vet, myself, so the honor is great to be able to stand up and receive this.

I would say that I would be remiss if I didn't say thank you to all the veterans of Blue Halo and especially the disabled veterans that are out there. It is those guys who reach out every day and mentor, provide assistance for the rest through classes, through mentorship for people, but they're the ones that really make it happen and allow us to bring on people, veterans, into Blue Halo. So my hat is off to them. A round of applause for them. (Applause)

So thank you, again, for this award and this honor to get up here and receive this on behalf of Blue Halo. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Knowles and Mr. Burgos withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Please congratulate our Large Patriot Employer of the Year with another round of applause. (Applause)

Thanks to DAV's dedicated outreach and collaboration with companies that participate in our nationwide career fairs, DAV receives numerous submissions to our Patriot Employer program each year. If you know of a small, medium or large company that prioritizes hiring veterans, you can nominate them or encourage them to nominate themselves at Patriot Employers-dot-org.

In addition to our top award recipients, we've added categories for ventures that excelled in specific categories, including: hiring and recruiting; career building and retention; excellence in community support.

The names of these outstanding employers will be submitted for the record. Also, they and all who are recognized through Patriot Employers-dot-org will receive digital badges to promote their excellence in hiring our nation's heroes.

Please give these and all employers who support our community one more round of applause. (Applause)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: In 2007, DAV created the Local Veterans Assistance Program, or L-VAP, providing volunteers with a seemingly unlimited number of opportunities to serve

while receiving the same recognition and incentives as those available to traditional VA and Transportation Network volunteers.

Under L-VAP the opportunities to assist veterans and their families are formed by the needs of local veterans. From yard clean-up and landscaping to serving as companions for veterans in long-term care facilities and hospice units, volunteers perform any task that may help improve a veteran's life.

I'll ask National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst and National Headquarters Executive Director Cody VanBoxel to the stage for their assistance, please.

(Whereupon, Mr. Kleindienst and Mr. VanBoxel joined the commander on the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, it is my extreme pleasure to recognize our top DAV state-level departments in the area of L-VAP service, starting with Division 1.

MR. LEWIS: The Division 1 Local Veterans' Assistance Program recipient is the Department of Virginia, (Applause) Past Department Commander Wilton King, with 243,618 hours. Here to accept the award is Department Adjutant Lisa Gregory. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Gregory advanced to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which Adjutant Gregory withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: The Division 2 Local Veterans Assistance Program Winner is the Department of South Carolina with 391,360 hours. (Applause) Here to accept the award is Past Department Commander Thomas Walls. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Past Commander Walls advanced to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, then Past Commander Walls withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: The Division 3 Local Veterans Assistance Program winner is the Department of Wisconsin, Past Department Commander Robert Hillard, with 77,588 hours. Here to receive the award is Department Adjutant John Polk. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Polk advanced to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which Adjutant Polk withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: The Division 4 Local Veterans Assistance Program winner is the Department of Nebraska, Past Department Commander Frederic Lee, with 102,171 hours. Here to bring home the award is Department Adjutant Jamie Jakub. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Jakub advanced to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, then Adjutant Jakub withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: The Division 5 Local Veterans Assistance Program winner is the Department of South Dakota, Past Department Commander Christine Speirs, with 41,926 hours. Here to receive the award is Department Adjutant Marty Pennock. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Pennock advanced to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, then Adjutant Pennock withdrew from the stage, along with Mr. Kleindienst and Mr. VanBoxel, and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I cannot say enough to express the gratitude of our organization for all of the incredible volunteers in VA hospitals, our Transportation Network drivers, and participants in the Local Veterans Assistance Program for their heartfelt service to disabled veterans and their families.

Thank you for giving your time and energy to help DAV keep our promise to the men and women who have served our great nation. Please join me again in giving them all a big hand for their service. (Applause)

Membership is the secret to DAV's success. Our depth of membership is only possible because of the efforts of close to 2,000 members dedicated to recruiting for our organization. Because of these dedicated veterans, our ideas, viewpoints, and experiences stay fresh and exciting. It's very simple, with these members DAV's voice is strong. Without them, we're weak.

I'm talking about DAV's recruiters and NSOs. I wholeheartedly believe that DAV has the best membership recruiters around.

I would like to invite National Membership Director Doug Wells to the stage as we recognize our top division winners in recruiting for 2023 and 2024. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Wells joined the commander on the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Under the leadership of Commander Richard Castellano, the Department of New York is the recipient of this year's Division 1 award. Accepting the award is Department Adjutant Shannan Sander. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Sander advanced to the stage to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which she withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Under the leadership of Commander Julius Marley, the Department of Missouri is the recipient of this year's Division 2 award. And accepting the award is Department Adjutant Michael Elmore. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Elmore advanced to the stage to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which he withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Under the leadership of Commander Mattie Whitfield, the Department of Maryland is the recipient of this year's Division 3 award. And accepting the award is Department Adjutant Tony Chandler. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Chandler advanced to the stage to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which he withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Under the leadership of Commander Marty Cantrell, the Department of Connecticut is the recipient of this year's Division 4 award. And accepting the award is Department Adjutant Al Church. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Church advanced to the stage to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which he withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: With the leadership of Commander Charles Greer, the Department of Wyoming is the recipient of this year's Division 5 award. And accepting the award is Department Adjutant Floyd Watson. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Watson advanced to the stage to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which he started to withdraw from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Don't go anywhere yet, Floyd. Our next award is the General Jonathan M. Wainwright Award. It is presented to the Department that closes the year with the largest percentage increase in total new members. The winner is the DAV Department of Wyoming. Please join us for another picture, Floyd. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Department Adjutant Watson received the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which he withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: The General Jonathan M. Wainwright Award is named after a past DAV national commander and Medal of Honor recipient who served as commander of allied forces in the Philippines at the time of their surrender to Japan in World War II.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: The Judge Robert S. Marx Award is presented to the Department that completes the year with the highest percentage increase of fully-paid life members over the goal. This year's winner is the Department of Minnesota. Please welcome Department Adjutant Butch Whitehead. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Whitehead received the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which he withdrew from the podium.)

MR. LEWIS: The Judge Robert S. Marx Award is named after DAV's founder. Marx served in the Army in World War I. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross and was injured in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in 1918. He later became a superior court judge and law professor.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Our next two award recipients recruited a combined total of 456 new members last year. If you're trying to do the math in your head, that works out to about 1.24 new members each day.

Many of you joined the DAV with the help of one of our outstanding national service officers. The details our NSOs retain is amazing. They each keep a working knowledge of veteran benefit law and an outstanding knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy, and physiology. On top of that, being a DAV NSO also requires a unique understanding of our organization.

I am honored to recognize the top recruiter from our NSO corps who, remarkably, recruited 271 veterans to join our ranks.

Though John Rodriguez of the Chicago National Service Office isn't able to make it, accepting on his behalf is the office supervisor Robert Nobertowitz. Please clap loud enough so John can hear us from the Windy City. (Applause)

(Whereupon, NSO Nobertowitz advanced to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which he withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Each year DAV recognizes the success of members who have signed 100 or more new members for three consecutive membership years with a gold lapel pin and by entering their names into the Membership Recruiters Hall of Fame.

This year's inductee recruited 129 new members this year alone. In the last three years he has added 402 veterans to our ranks.

From the Maryland National Service Office, please stand and join me in a round of applause for Mr. Craig Barnes. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Mr. Barnes advanced to the stage to receive his pin, at which time an official photograph was taken, then he withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Our top recruiting member of the year is Shannan Sander from DAV Chapter 15 in New York. She recruited 185 new members. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Sander advanced to receive the Commander's Award, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which she, along with Mr. VanBoxel and Mr. Wells, withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Please give one final round of applause for all our recruiters. (Applause) I'm sure we're all looking forward to seeing what you do next year.

It is now my privilege to introduce someone who has dedicated his post-service career to providing the fullest possible accounting of our missing personnel to their families and the nation.

A retired major general with 34 years of service in the Air Force, Kelly McKeague serves as the Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or the D-P-A-A. While he has been in his current position since 2017, this was not his first position with the agency.

General McKeague served as the first-ever Deputy Director of the D-P-A-A and, before that, as Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

He commissioned in 1981 after graduating from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and served as a civil engineering officer until his retirement in 2015.

Please join me in welcoming General Kelly McKeague. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Retired Major General McKeague advanced to the podium, followed by a bugle playing.)

RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL KELLY McKEAGUE: Well, I'm not sure what that was but good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL McKEAGUE: National Commander Espinosa, National Adjutant Jesinoski, and, of course, distinguished veterans and Auxiliary members of the DAV. It truly is a distinct privilege and an honor to participate in your national convention.

Not only is this an opportunity to provide you an update of the POW/MIA mission but, more importantly, it's a chance to thank you for steadfastly championing the POW/MIA mission.

It's not lost on me that DAV's priority is "keeping our promise made to America's veterans" and that's similar DPAA's motto which is, "Fulfilling our nation's promise." It's because of this promise that you help veterans in extraordinary ways. And for us at DPAA, we work to bring unreturned veterans home to their family and community.

Searing for, recovering, identifying missing Americans from past wars is a sacred obligation. And this mission is a sacred obligation because it involves your comrades in arms. It's also a moral imperative because they made the supreme sacrifice for the nation we love, and because their Gold Star families deserve to have them home.

These words are conveyed by the two photos you see juxtaposed here. The one on the left shows the scope and scale of our excavations, in this case, an Air Force F-4 crash site in Vietnam with two missing Airmen. The photo on the right is what is afforded every person we identify, even if it's a single tooth. They are afforded a full military honors burial. (Applause)

The POW/MIA mission is global because we go wherever Americans went missing in battle since World War II. It's also generational because second and third generation family members still carry a void in life and heart as they longingly wait for answers.

As you see here, the number of MIAs are staggering. And even you just consider the 38,000 we estimate to be recoverable, it's daunting. These numbers, together with the passage of time, are the enemies we battle today. These are also the difficult cases.

I'll note that the reason why the numbers come down of MIAs from war to war is because the U.S. military got better at recovering personnel when they fell in battle. In fact, 20 years of combat in Afghanistan: zero – zero MIAs. (Applause)

As you see here, this noble mission benefits greatly from both the recognition and cooperation of 46 countries. This very day we have 294 people deployed in ten countries: Laos, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, France, Austria, Germany, Croatia, and Poland.

And next week we will send a team – this is incredible. We will send a team to China, who is cooperating with the United States on this mission, despite the strains of the bilateral relationship.

Ladies and gentlemen, sadly, there is one exception and that is North Korea. Now what's heart wrenching about this non-cooperation is the fact that of the 7,400 missing from the Korean War, 5,300 are in North Korea. It is heart wrenching. And the last time we were in North Korea operating there was 2005.

Here in the U.S. the POW/MIA mission generates strong interest and visibility in the halls of Congress as well as with the American public. And this is a direct result of DAV's staunch advocacy at all levels, nationally and at the departments and at your chapters.

And while the numbers of MIAs are daunting. They are so much more than just figures. Each has a unique story of memories that their families still carry and treasure through generations. And all of them longingly hope for resolution.

I want to share with you two such stories where identifications brought closures and, more importantly, two heroes are finally home.

This is Army Private First Class Thomas Smith who hailed from Grant, Michigan, population 900. In November 1949 – one day after he turned 17 and enlisted in the Army – he found himself in one of the early battles of the Korean War. He was a combat engineer and volunteered to stand guard and protect a demolition position near Busan, South Korea. He was last seen valiantly defending the position.

His remains were turned over after the war, but they were unidentifiable, along with 860 others. Other than the one set of remains at the Tomb of the Unknown in Arlington, all of them were buried as an Unknown in the National Cemetery in Honolulu. We are in the process of disinterring all of them and, to date, have identified 250 of these former MIAs. (Applause)

After a 32-mile escort by the Michigan State Patrol from Grand Rapids Airport to Grant, Michigan, PFC Smith was interred June 29th in his beloved hometown, next to his parents and siblings. The whole community came out to pay their respects, as you see here – first responders, veterans, I guarantee you DAV members, school kids, all lined the streets with flags and signs. One woman's sign said appropriately, "We don't know them all, but we owe them all."

PFC Smith was the second-oldest of five and is survived by his sister, Gloria who is 85 and his brother John who is 81 and was 7 when his brother went missing. This is an earlier photo of the five siblings together, but it's also the last one that his brother John has. PFC Smith, as you see here, is next to his younger siblings, Gloria and John, with his hands held on them.

Here is Marine Corps Captain Ron Forrester, a Texas native from Odessa and a Texas A&M graduate. He and his younger brother, identical twin Don, who is now 77, are pictured here as young boys. Captain Forrester was an A-6A Bombardier/Navigator who was shot down over North Vietnam two days after Christmas 1972 at the age of 25.

Over the years multiple teams investigated and excavated Vietnamese ground in search of Captain Forrester and his pilot, Marine Corps Captain Ralph Chipman. An unwavering commitment and a relentless perseverance led to the discovery last year of bone fragments, teeth, a dog tag, even a gas credit card, all of which were used to identify and account for Captains Chipman and Forrester.

I love the photo in the middle. It's from the memorial service in Texas where hundreds attended, family members, Aggies. Speaking at the service you see here is Captain Forrester's granddaughter, Lillian. Above here is a projection of a photo of her and her then young mom at her grandfather's memorial marker. That young mom was two years old when her dad went missing. This is the last picture of them together.

As she got older, Karoni became more involved with the National League of Families, who designed the POW/MIA bracelets that we're all familiar with, as well as the iconic black and white POW/MIA flag. Karoni will bury her dad at Arlington National Cemetery on October 7th. (Applause)

And because PFC Smith and Captain Forrester are identified and now home, the American Battle Monuments Commission – and you will hear next from their chairman, General Garrett – will place a bronze rosette next to their names on the marble tables at the National Cemetery in Honolulu.

They are why this mission matters and how your appreciation, support, and advocacy of the POW/MIA mission enables POW/MIA families, like the Smiths and Forresters, to have answers they have long sought. From your work of your Interim POW/MIA Committee, who I'll speak to this afternoon, to attending the military burials of returned service members, thank you.

To your national leaders visiting our laboratory just as National Commander Espinosa did in January, thank you. The iconic black and white table honoring our MIAs and POWs, and for flying the flag over your departments, thank you.

Distinguished veterans and Auxiliary members, the fact that the United States of America vigorously pursues the missing is the right thing to do. Like you, when they entered the military they signed a contract. But when they made the supreme sacrifice, they entered into a covenant.

A contract is legally binding, a covenant is a spiritual agreement. A contract is an agreement between parties and can be broken. But a covenant is a pledge and a perpetual promise. A contract is signed. A covenant is sealed. Most importantly, a contract exchanges one good for another; but a covenant is giving oneself to the other.

A symbol of this covenant is the iconic black and white POW/MIA flag that flies over federal facilities every single day. It represents and communicates America's commitment, determination, and hopefulness. On the flag are the poignant words, "You are not forgotten."

Distinguished veterans and Auxiliary members, I can assure you that the Department of Defense has not forgotten and will not forget. And thank you to the DAV for not forgetting and keeping the promise made to our unreturned veterans.

May God bless our MIAs and their families and the sacred mission. And may He shed his grace upon each of you, the DAV, and your sacred mission. And may he always bless our great country. I salute all of you. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the general withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, General McKeague. Thank you.

For those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and are interred on the battlefields around the globe, one agency is there to honor their service and achievements: the American Battle Monuments Commission.

Established by Congress in 1923, the ABMC is the guardian of America's overseas commemorative ceremonies, cemeteries and memorials and honors the service, achievements, and sacrifice of U.S. armed forces. There are more than 26 cemeteries and 31 memorials, monuments, and markers under the care of ABMC.

Additionally, there are more than 140,000 U.S. servicemen and servicewomen interred at the cemeteries, and more than 94,000 missing in action or lost or buried at sea are memorialized on cemetery Walls of the Missing and on three memorials in the United States.

I now have the privilege of introducing you to Retired Army General Michael X. Garrett who serves as the chairman for the American Battle Monuments Commission. General Garrett retired from the Army after 38 distinguished years of service, including more than 10 years in various commands within the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Garrett serves alongside ABMC's other appointed commissioners, working to ensure the agency and its efforts continue to fulfill the commitment made by ABMC's first chairman, General John J. Pershing, that "time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome General Michael X. Garrett. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Secretary Garrett advanced to the podium.)

RETIRED GENERAL MICHAEL X. GARRETT: Well, good morning, everyone. (Bugle plays) Oh, I'll try that again. Good morning, everyone.

(Response of "Good morning.")

RETIRED GENERAL GARRETT: You know, what Commander Espinosa did not mention is that the best non-commissioned officer I have ever known is a guy named Command Sergeant Major Ed Garrett, my father, who served 35 years in our Army.

I have known throughout my 62 years of life nothing but being in and around our Army. (Cheers) And I want to – I just want to start today, you know, I am about 18 months into my transition journey as I left the Army last September.

And I have learned over the last 18 months of all of the efforts that organizations do to ensure that veterans like me, my dad, my sister, are looked out for and taken care of and provided a voice when they otherwise wouldn't have one. And today I want to thank each and every one of you for what you do in that regard. So from me to you, thank you. (Applause)

So thanks for inviting me to share the mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission with you today, to report on why we do it.

Our Secretary Charles Djou shared some of the ABMC story with you last year. And I am honored to be here today with you on behalf of my fellow commissioners and the ABMC staff. Simply stated, our mission is to preserve the legacy of service and sacrifice of the U.S. armed forces.

We do so at 26 cemeteries and 31 monuments in 17 countries. We also do this with a dedicated team of only 500 employees worldwide. We are a small agency, yet our mission is one of great relevance to our nation and to the world.

The character of a country can be determined by the way it takes care of its war dead. It is a measure of its heart and soul.

In his World War I poem, "The Young Dead Soldiers do not Speak," Archibald MacLeish wrote, "We leave you our deaths, give them their meaning." MacLeish, a World War I veteran, wrote those words after losing a brother in The Great War.

For over 100 years the men and women of ABMC have dedicated themselves to ensuring that the memory of those who fell overseas defending our nation, and those who fought at their side, does not fade, to give meaning to their sacrifice.

ABMC was established in 1923. We have entered our second century, continuing to fulfill our nation's promise that, in the words of our first chairman, General of the Armies John J. Pershing, "Time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

The commission's work goes beyond merely preserving physical commemorative sites. It encompasses a mission to keep the memories of those we honor alive for future generation. Their final resting places and their stories etched on their memorials speak of the courage and the indomitable spirit that defines the American character.

ABMC works daily to ensure that these stories continue to inspire, to teach, and to resonate. We are becoming more visitor-centric. Last December we opened a new visitor center at Netherlands American Cemetery. It's our tenth.

Our visitor centers provide historical context for why America maintains cemeteries on foreign soil, how those buried and memorialized within them died, and the values for which they died. We do this for the generations that do not have personal awareness of the World Wars.

When the ABMC was established following World War I, visitors did not need historical context. They knew the story all too well. The wives and mothers who visited the cemeteries came not to learn but to grieve, to say farewell. This is no longer the case.

Younger generations do not know the story. And it is left to agencies like ABMC and organizations like the DAV to ensure that we never forget those who died, or returned home with life-altering injuries or psychological scars, or the families who share in that sacrifice.

In a very real sense, the ABMC has transitioned from a grieving mission to an education and remembrance mission.

In June we hosted an international event at Normandy American Cemetery in France to mark the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings. Two presidents, 12,000 guests gathered on those sacred grounds to remember, to honor, those who participated in the historic battle that turned the tide of the war.

Nearly 200 World War II veterans were able to travel to attend the event; more than 20 of whom participated in the D-Day invasion. The youngest was 96. The oldest was 107. How many will be with us for the 85th Anniversary? And when they are all gone, who will remember their stories?

Normandy is our best known and most visited cemetery because of its connection to D-Day. But the other ABMC sites are equally impressive and equally inspirational.

In two weeks at Rhone American Cemetery in France we will commemorate the 80th Anniversary of Operation Dragoon, the Southern France landings.

In September, at our Honolulu Memorial, family members will add bronze rosettes to the names of their Vietnam War missing, reflecting the recovery and identification by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

And in December, at the Battle of the Bulge Memorial in Bastogne, Belgium, we will commemorate the 80th Anniversary of that bitter 1944 battle.

We are working to expand our partnerships with national museums while seeking new partnership opportunities with educational institutions across our country.

This is our purpose.

Maintaining the Commission's cemeteries and monuments to the highest standards will always be a Commission priority. But preserving the legacy of those entrusted to our care, by expanding public awareness of their deeds, has become an equally compelling priority.

No matter how many years pass after each service member is lost in war or returns home battle-scarred, we share in your belief that their service must never be forgotten.

Some of you have visited our sites and we thank you. We thank you for helping us honor our fallen. We warmly welcome all visitors to experience these special places in person, but especially veterans like you who know all too well the cost of war.

I want to close with a short video we produced for this year's D-Day commemoration. I think it speaks directly to what we do and why we do it.

(Whereupon, the ABMC video "Remember them" was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

RETIRED GENERAL GARRETT: This is our purpose. We will continue to work tirelessly to cherish their memory and honor their legacy so that future generations recognize the debt that we owe to our veterans. That is our promise and we commit ourselves to its fulfillment.

May God bless all of our veterans and may God bless this great country that we are all so fortunate to live in. Thank you all very much. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, Retired General Garrett withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. I would like to call on Board of Directors' Chairperson Joe Parsetich for his report.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Board of Directors chairman advanced to the podium.)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JOSEPH PARSETICH: Bet you didn't think you'd see me up here again. (Laughter) National Commander Espinosa, fellow members of the National Executive Committee, DAV members and guests, good afternoon.

(Response of "Good afternoon.")

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PARSETICH: I'm going to go off script for about ten seconds here because you something that we get to all enjoy and appreciate, I don't know if we ever fully recognize, what do you think about our technical crew that does our lights and sound and all the (Inaudible)? Huh, what do you think? (Applause)

Let me also begin by recognizing those with whom I've served on the Board of Directors: Treasurer Charles Edwards from Texas who was, unfortunately, unable to be here today; Vice-Chairman Daniel Contreras from California; Secretary and National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski, from Kentucky;

Director and NEC from the Fifteenth District, David Gerke from Missouri; Director and NEC from the Seventeenth District, Jerry Estes from Utah; and Director and NEC from the Eighteenth District, William "Bill" Dolan from Nevada who was also unable to join us here this week.

It is my honor and privilege to present a report on the financial affairs of our organization for the six-month period ending June 30th, 2024. DAV's total fundraising support through that date was almost \$59 million. Contributions were just over \$43 million; and bequests were close to \$16 million.

Under the Department Fundraising Program payouts to departments in December 2023 and June 2024 totaled just about \$3 million. Since the program began in 1994, \$119 million have been distributed to departments for their service programs.

The Board would also like to thank all of our departments for their continued participation in these programs, and especially our members for their generosity.

As of June 2024, DAV received total support and revenue from all sources of just under \$149 million. The total support and revenue is affected by a decrease in contributed media value.

Also through June 2024, DAV had total expenditures of roughly \$129 million, of which \$104 million were for our service programs, which is almost 82 percent of our expenditures.

Over that same period, fundraising expenditures were roughly \$18 million, a little bit over \$1 million less than June of 2023.

Administrative expenses were just a little less than \$5 million.

And as of June 30th, 2024, the market value of our general fund long-term investment portfolio is just over \$491 million.

DAV's net assets or net worth increased from almost \$440 million at this time last year to in excess of \$494 million, a \$54 million increase, or 12 percent.

On June 30th, 2024, the Life Membership Fund Reserve was a little bit under \$56 million.

Commander, it is my privilege to present DAV's proposed 2025 Annual Budget for ratification by the Convention.

At the May 23rd, 2024, meeting of the Board of Directors, the Board was presented the 2025 proposed budget. The Board unanimously approved the proposed budget at that time, a copy of which was provided to all convention attendees at registration.

I would like to thank National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski and his staff for all their hard work which made this report possible. Let me also thank you, Commander Espinosa, for your support of the Board of Directors and our treasurer that we have received from you.

This concludes my report to the National Convention, a report I feel honored to offer to our delegates on behalf of our Board and treasurer. I thank you and would move for the adoption of my report and the approval of the proposed 2025 annual budget.

(Whereupon, the chairman withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Can I get a motion to accept the Board of Directors' treasurer's report?

MR. DON MOORE: Microphone Number 1 from the Sunshine State of Florida, DAV Chapter 84, Greater Daytona Area, Don Moore, I make a motion we accept the report.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I now have a motion. May I have a second?

MS. SHANNAN SANDER: Mic 2.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 2.

MS. SANDER: Shannan Sander, Chapter 15, New York, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered.
(Whereupon, the chairman withdrew from the stage.)

I would like to call on Chairman Rob Reynolds for the report of the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws. This is the first reading of the proposed Bylaw changes.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Convention Chairman and Past National Commander Robert Reynolds advanced to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER ROBERT REYNOLDS: Comrade Commander and delegates. Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER REYNOLDS: The National Convention Committee on Constitution and Bylaws was called to order on August 3rd, 2024, by the Committee Advisors, Ed Hartman and Rob Reynolds.

The first order of business was the election of a Convention Committee chairman and a secretary. Rob Reynolds was elected as chairman and Robert Hill was elected as secretary.

The Committee then proceeded to review the resolutions submitted. And I now will report to you the resolutions recommended for adoption by this national convention. For the purposes of saving time I will read only the number and the purpose of the resolution.

Resolution Number 446, amend Article III, Section 3.6, Paragraph 1 of the Bylaws to allow for two delegates and two alternates for each state department at the national convention rather than one delegate and one alternate per department;

Resolution Number 561, amend Article III, Section 3.5, Paragraph 1 of the Bylaws to increase the national convention registration fee from \$25 to \$35 for each delegate, alternate, and visitor attending national convention;

Resolution Number 562, amend Article III, Section 3.5, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to increase the amount to be deposited into the national convention fund per chapter. The increase would consist of: for chapters with 100 members or less increase from \$20 to \$30; for chapters with 101 to 1,000 members, increase from \$40 to \$60; for chapters with 1,001 to 3,000 members increase from \$60 to \$90; and for chapters with 3,001 members or more increase from \$80 to \$120;

Resolution Number 563, amend Article VIII, Section 8.4, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to increase the amount required to prompt a CPA review for departments with gross annual income, excluding all income from the national organization, from \$300,000 to \$500,000;

Resolution Number 564, amend Article IX, Section 9.3, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to increase the amount required to prompt a CPA review for chapters with gross annual income, excluding all income from the national organization, from \$300,000 to \$500,000;

Resolution Number 565, amend Article X, Section 10.1, Paragraph 3 of the Bylaws to increase the amount required to prompt a CPA review for Auxiliary and other subordinate entities with gross annual income, excluding all income from the national organization, from \$300,000 to \$500,000;

Resolution Number 566, amend Article XVIII, Section 18.3, Paragraph 1 of the Bylaws to allow the National Adjutant to determine the reasonable time necessary for subordinate entities required to spend down funds to satisfy compliance with Articles XVIII, Section 18.2 of the Bylaws;

Resolution Number 567, amend Article XVIII, Section 18.3, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to permit the National Adjutant to determine whether the expenditure of funds are being spent for service purposes for subordinate entities required to spend down funds to satisfy compliance with Article XVIII, Section 18.2, of the Bylaws.

Comrade Commander, this completes the first reading of the report of the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws and the recommended changes to the Constitution and Bylaws.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Rob.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER REYNOLDS: Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Constitution and Bylaws Committee chair, Past National Commander Reynolds, withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: There will be no action taken at this time. We will hear the final report of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee at the final business session on Tuesday.

National Adjutant Jesinoski, do you have any announcements?

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Adjutant Jesinoski advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT BARRY JESINOSKI: Once again, thank you to Caption Call by Sorenson for sponsoring the closed captioning of this business session.

Join us right here for Fun Night tomorrow at 8:00 p.m. for the return of Gary Sinise and the Lieutenant Dan Band. (Applause) This year's concert is sponsored, once again, by our good friends at TriWest who have generously donated to bring Gary and the team to Phoenix once again to our national convention to perform.

Don't forget that today at 4:00 p.m., or 1600 for you hard chargers who still keep military time, (Laughter) 4:00 p.m. is the cut-off for you to make reservations to attend the Line Officer Dinner. Those who did not RSVP, as I mentioned yesterday, for the Officer Dinner, when preregistering online must do so at Registration today, again, by 4:00 p.m.

As a reminder, tickets will not be issued for the dinner. An email will be sent by Tuesday morning to attendees who do RSVP that they're attending, noting their assigned table number and further instructions regarding how to check in at the entrance to the dinner.

And, again, we ask for your patience as this is our first time with a convention center and so the security and the check-ins are a little bit different and a little more onerous for us.

Our regular business resumes Tuesday morning at 8:30. We will start off with Committee reports, including the final report of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. We will also be joined by a very special guest, none other than Governor Katie Hobbs, who will – we are all thrilled to have address our delegates and guests. We will hear reports of the Charitable Service Trust and our National Service Foundation, plus an update on our Memorial in Washington.

All who wish to donate to any DAV national entity, in the interest of time, are encouraged to fill out the donation form in your bags before making your way to our donation space located in West Exhibit Hall 2, inside registration.

On Tuesday afternoon we will hold our final business session and conclude with nominations and elections of national officers.

We are once again giving away three \$50 gift certificates that can be redeemed at the DAV store online or here during the national convention. We should probably increase that, shouldn't we in the future?

(Response of "Yes.")

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: We've been giving \$50 gift certificates away for a while. I don't know how much work it's going to be on you, Doug, but let's make it \$75. (Applause) Can we afford that?

(Response of "100.")

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Oh, 100? Maybe we'll do that next year. (Laughter) We give a little and you ask for more. (Laughter) You must be present to win. And if I call your name and you are in the hall, please see Membership Director Doug Wells up here in the front of the stage – in the front of the stage – as soon as we adjourn.

And at that time Doug will sweat it out as to figure out how to get you your additional \$25. (Laughter) Robert Gilmore, Arizona Number 20; (Applause) Grant Harris, Colorado Number 26; (Applause) and Frieda Gardner, Florida Number 9. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Jesinoski returned to his seat and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Barry. Ladies and gentlemen, if able, please rise. I ask Chaplain Varner Dancer to please lead us in a closing prayer.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Almighty One, once again we come to give thanks for all that we've seen, all that we participated in. We're so grateful and thankful for all of those who received their due by honoring them in their faithfulness and their commitment to be the wind beneath our wings.

Those that received the awards, help them to learn, only the way that you can, how appreciative and how grateful we are. As we leave this place we continue this journey knowing that we've only just begun with great expectations to be the leaders and set examples for others to follow.

These and all things we ask and receive. And the people said Amen.

(Response of "Amen.")

(Whereupon, the chaplain withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. The Convention stands in recess until 8:30 a.m. Tuesday.
(One rap of gavel)

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed at 11:23 o'clock, a.m., on Sunday, August 4, 2024.)

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National Service Offices Monetary Stats 2023	
Compensation	\$27,123,909,460.00
DIC	\$845,055,926.00
Veteran Pension	\$231,093,643.00
Survivor Pension	\$26,984,475.00
Education Benefits	\$213,605,660.67
Special Entitlements (Clothing Allowance)	\$69,833,930.19
Total Benefits	\$28,429,136,978.86

Disabled American Veterans

Financial Statements as of and for the
Year Ended December 31, 2023, and
Independent Auditor's Report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Directors of
Disabled American Veterans:

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Disabled American Veterans (DAV), which comprise the statement of financial position as of December 31, 2023, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cashflows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements (collectively referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of DAV as of December 31, 2023, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of DAV and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about DAV's ability to continue as a going concern for one year after the date that the financial statements are issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery,

intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of DAV's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about DAV's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Deloitte + Touche LLP

April 9, 2024

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023

ASSETS		LIABILITIES
CASH	\$ 18,679,770	LIABILITIES:
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	8,642,253	Accounts payable
INTEREST AND DIVIDENDS RECEIVABLE	112,451	Accrued expenses
PREPAID EXPENSES AND OTHERS	7,875,869	Pension liability
INVESTMENTS	486,148,817	Postretirement benefit obligation
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT—Net	24,052,072	Lease liability-finance lease
RIGHT OF USE ASSET-FINANCE LEASE	9,077,303	Deferred revenue
OTHER ASSETS	3,565,984	Other liabilities
LIFE MEMBERSHIP:		Loans payable
Cash	3,058,425	Life membership:
Accounts receivable	182,439	Accounts payable
Interest and dividends receivable	9,599	Reserve for future distribution of
Investments	46,339,404	life membership dues
TOTAL	<u>\$ 607,744,386</u>	Total liabilities
		NET ASSETS:
		Without donor restrictions—undesignated
		With donor restrictions:
		Purpose restrictions
		Endowment funds
		Total net assets
		TOTAL
		<u>\$ 607,744,386</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions		Total
		Purpose Restrictions	Endowment Funds	
SUPPORT AND REVENUE:				
Support:				
Contributions received primarily from				
direct mail solicitations	\$ 117,834,716	\$ 18,628,402	\$ -	\$ 136,463,118
National per capita dues	<u>3,908,415</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,908,415</u>
Contributions of cash and other financial assets	<u>121,743,131</u>	<u>18,628,402</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>140,371,533</u>
Contributed services and facilities—primarily services	39,339,895	-	-	39,339,895
Contributed media and materials—primarily media	<u>105,454,009</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>105,454,009</u>
Contributions of nonfinancial assets	144,793,904	-	-	144,793,904
Total support	<u>266,537,035</u>	<u>18,628,402</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>285,165,437</u>
Revenue:				
List royalties	512,326	-	-	512,326
Miscellaneous revenue	<u>549,112</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>549,112</u>
Total revenue	<u>1,061,438</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,061,438</u>
NET INVESTMENT RETURN	59,025,676	-	1,947,524	60,973,200
NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DONOR RESTRICTIONS	<u>12,625,461</u>	<u>(12,336,535)</u>	<u>(288,926)</u>	<u>-</u>
Total support and revenue	<u>339,249,610</u>	<u>6,291,867</u>	<u>1,658,598</u>	<u>347,200,075</u>
EXPENSES:				
Program services:				
Service program	41,044,212	-	-	41,044,212
Employment program	2,247,211	-	-	2,247,211
Entrepreneurial services	473,490	-	-	473,490
Legislative service program	2,493,482	-	-	2,493,482
Voluntary service program—primarily contributed services	40,209,169	-	-	40,209,169
State services and disaster relief	5,383,192	-	-	5,383,192
Communications program	9,847,866	-	-	9,847,866
Public service announcement program—primarily contributed media	106,418,653	-	-	106,418,653
Membership program	7,819,103	-	-	7,819,103
Public awareness outreach	<u>26,787,248</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>26,787,248</u>
Total program services	<u>242,723,626</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>242,723,626</u>
Supporting services:				
Fundraising costs	39,855,005	-	-	39,855,005
Administrative and general	8,955,322	-	-	8,955,322
Total supporting services	<u>48,810,327</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>48,810,327</u>
Total expenses	<u>291,533,953</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>291,533,953</u>
EXCESS OF EXPENSES OVER SUPPORT AND REVENUE	47,715,657	6,291,867	1,658,598	55,666,122
OTHER CHANGES IN NET ASSETS:				
Change in fair market value of interest rate swap	(274,329)	-	-	(274,329)
Gain on sale of real estate	1,199,970	-	-	1,199,970
Pension liability and other postretirement benefit obligation adjustment	<u>(3,352,548)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(3,352,548)</u>
Total other changes in net assets	<u>(2,426,907)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,426,907)</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	45,288,750	6,291,867	1,658,598	53,239,215
NET ASSETS—Beginning of year	<u>406,270,631</u>	<u>3,221,430</u>	<u>11,714,117</u>	<u>421,206,178</u>
NET ASSETS—End of year	<u>\$ 451,559,381</u>	<u>\$ 9,513,297</u>	<u>\$ 13,372,715</u>	<u>\$ 474,445,393</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

**STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	Service Program	Employment Program	Entrepreneurial Services	Legislative Service Program	Voluntary Service Program	State Services and Disaster Relief	Communications Program	Public Service Announcement Program	Membership Program	Public Awareness Outreach	Total Program Services	Fundraising Costs	Administrative and General	Total Supporting Services	Total
Salaries	\$ 24,961,738	\$ 361,711	\$ 189,097	\$ 1,028,812	\$ 759,500	\$ -	\$ 1,422,924	\$ -	\$ 154,323	\$ -	\$ 102,667	\$ 2,771,533	\$ 6,374,597	\$ 9,146,130	\$ 39,412,944
Employee benefits	5,854,159	122,285	23,701	200,215	194,385	-	375,138	-	401,021	-	717,104	732,569	1,959,915	2,238,484	9,699,588
Payroll taxes	1,915,746	31,288	14,098	77,324	51,991	-	102,653	-	100,844	-	2,293,344	197,664	486,647	634,311	2,927,655
DAV Transportation Network and LVP volunteers	-	-	-	-	26,918,702	-	-	-	-	-	26,918,702	-	-	-	26,918,702
Contributed legal services	-	-	-	-	9,241,636	-	-	-	-	-	9,241,636	-	-	-	9,241,636
HSC and Transport Network Grants	-	-	-	-	61,134	-	-	-	-	-	61,134	-	-	-	61,134
Columbia Trust	-	-	-	-	99,392	-	-	-	-	-	99,392	-	-	-	99,392
Other grants	91,882	97,500	8,000	-	277,333	1,564,477	-	-	182,439	-	2,133,881	-	-	-	2,133,881
Disaster relief	-	-	-	-	-	693,600	-	-	-	-	693,600	-	-	-	693,600
State service program	-	-	-	-	-	3,125,115	-	-	-	-	3,125,115	-	-	-	3,125,115
Scholarships	-	-	-	-	92,500	-	-	-	-	-	92,500	-	-	-	92,500
Expenses of national convention	103,794	-	36,058	7,854	542,830	-	-	-	1,159,829	269	1,850,234	260	-	260	1,850,494
Expenses of national commander and committees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	565,813	-	565,813	-	-	-	565,813
Travel/accommodations, training, and relocation	1,881,128	118,124	52,206	49,640	665,666	-	80,725	-	63,218	835	2,911,542	85,292	102,495	187,787	3,099,329
Facilities	3,179,559	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	835	3,179,559	-	-	-	3,179,559
Contributed media and materials	945	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45,000	45,000	105,439,084	-	-	-	105,439,084
Postage and shipping	386,148	9,608	1,761	1,667	107,574	-	1,391,289	756	104,818	21,893	2,025,004	12,155,047	244,943	12,899,990	14,425,004
Equipment rental and maintenance	360,496	43,930	10,140	64,880	146,453	-	89,734	17,307	298,310	43,341	1,074,741	658,286	1,142,118	1,800,404	2,875,445
Supplies	396,856	61,705	24,086	9,172	155,723	-	30,183	4,923	141,484	17,704	841,836	186,654	189,544	376,198	1,218,034
Insurance	100,143	-	-	1,558	375	-	1,153	-	1,153	2,410	106,992	-	-	-	446,192
Telephone	203,416	1,887	313	2,584	2,984	-	5,372	-	4,373	-	220,337	3,414	164,132	167,546	388,483
Advertising costs	7,865	810,400	1,940	-	27,822	-	3,451,495	-	67,092	81,824	4,448,438	9,506,715	141,550	9,648,265	14,966,703
Printing of magazine	-	-	-	-	-	-	907,983	-	338,507	4,216	533,394	32,988,564	393,058	33,851,622	33,895,016
Cost of mailing materials	174,976	-	-	-	3,499	-	11,386	-	-	-	223,472	130,882	130,882	130,882	354,354
Heat, light, water, and power	223,472	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	223,472	-	-	-	223,472
Security service	263,809	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,171	269,980	-	195,109	195,109	465,089
Depreciation of property and equipment	688,101	81,275	986	3,145	111,915	-	24,637	-	357,116	-	1,167,775	296,807	1,415,997	1,712,804	2,679,979
Legal fees	304,267	-	657	-	-	-	-	-	24,221	-	329,485	99,046	28,892	121,938	451,083
Professional fees	160,805	125,000	24,468	20,503	641	-	715,947	1,002,628	281,305	130,441	2,461,747	4,809,704	1,060,513	5,870,217	8,331,964
Technology services	25,000	478	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,650	-	32,606	-	1,473	144,416	177,022
Other expenses	633,449	644	30,536	2,459	248,288	-	1,405	-	19,070	64	935,905	26,366	1,320,305	1,345,671	2,281,576
Support for membership service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Allocations from (to) other departments	(873,542)	469,117	55,453	1,023,661	499,708	-	1,235,832	-	2,257,608	36,433,270	31,101,107	(2,463,738)	(6,463,718)	(31,101,107)	-
TOTAL	\$ 41,044,212	\$ 2,247,211	\$ 472,490	\$ 2,493,482	\$ 4,409,669	\$ 5,583,192	\$ 9,847,866	\$ 1,064,118,653	\$ 7,819,103	\$ 36,787,248	\$ 242,723,626	\$ 39,955,005	\$ 8,955,322	\$ 48,810,327	\$ 291,533,953

See notes to financial statements.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:	
Change in net assets	\$ 53,239,215
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash used in operating activities:	
Noncash contributions	(1,233,785)
Pension liability and other postretirement benefit obligation adjustment	3,352,548
Change in fair market value of interest rate swap	274,329
Depreciation	1,943,999
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	8,399
Net change in appreciation of investments	(31,255,743)
Net gain on sale of investments	(22,181,048)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:	
Accounts receivable	(3,888,832)
Interest and dividends receivable	90,470
Prepaid expenses and others	(1,036,399)
Right of use asset-finance lease	(9,077,103)
Other assets	(1,209,854)
Accounts payable	(348,250)
Accrued expenses	(64,123)
Pension liability and other postretirement benefits obligation	(3,361,620)
Lease liability-finance lease	14,021,196
Deferred revenue	(59,399)
Other liabilities	98,569
Reserve for future distribution of life membership dues	5,584,304
	<u>5,584,304</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>4,896,873</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:	
Payments for property and equipment	(2,944,254)
Proceeds from the sale of property and equipment	4,900
Purchases of investments for endowments	(4,566,954)
Proceeds from the sale of investments for endowment	4,220,960
Purchases of investments	(99,563,730)
Proceeds from the sale of investments	<u>102,905,651</u>
Net cash provided by investing activities	<u>56,573</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:	
Payments on finance lease	(265,784)
Payments on term loan	<u>(2,600,004)</u>
Net cash used by financing activities	<u>(2,865,788)</u>
NET INCREASE IN CASH	2,087,658
CASH—Beginning of year	<u>19,650,537</u>
CASH—End of year	<u>\$ 21,738,195</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

AS OF AND FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

1. ORGANIZATION

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a Congressionally chartered, not-for-profit service organization. DAV is dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. DAV accomplishes this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access a full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

- Providing free, professional assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other agencies of government
- Providing outreach concerning its program services to the American people, generally, and to disabled veterans and their families, specifically
- Representing the interests of disabled veterans, their families, their widowed spouses, and their orphans before Congress, the White House, and the judicial branch, as well as state and local governments
- Extending DAV's mission of hope into the communities where these veterans and their families live through a network of state-level departments and local chapters
- Providing a structure through which disabled veterans can express their compassion for their fellow veterans through a variety of volunteer programs

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Financial Statements—The accompanying financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAP).

New Accounting Standards—In June 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-13, *Financial Instruments—Credit Losses*, which is included in ASC Topic 326, *Measurement of Credit Losses on Financial Instruments*. The new standard requires a financial asset (or group of financial assets) measured at amortized cost basis, such as trade receivables, to be presented at the net amount expected to be collected. Investments held at fair value where the change in fair value is reported through the change in net assets, as occurs at the Foundation, as well as pledge receivables, are excluded from the scope of ASU 2016-13. The new standard revises the accounting requirements related to the measurement of credit losses and will require organizations to measure all expected credit losses for financial assets based on historical experience, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts about collectability. The adoption of ASU 2016-13 did not have a material impact on the financial statements and related disclosures. There were no credit losses recorded for the year-ended December 31, 2023.

Cash—DAV considers all liquid instruments purchased with a maturity date of three months or less to be cash equivalents that are stated at cost, which approximates fair value. DAV maintains its cash in bank deposit accounts, which, at times, exceed federally insured limits. DAV has not experienced any losses in such accounts.

Accounts Receivable—Amounts recorded as accounts receivable are reduced to their net realizable value, as appropriate.

Investments—Investments are carried at fair value, and realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected within net investment return, in the statement of activities. The fair value of DAV’s investments is determined based on the quoted market prices of the related securities or quoted prices in active markets for instruments that are similar, or model-derived valuations in which all significant inputs and significant value drivers are observable in active markets. Gains and losses on the sale of investment securities are recognized based upon the specific identification method and are reflected in net investment return. DAV’s policy is to report its cash and cash equivalents within its investment trust accounts, which include money market funds, within investments on the statement of financial positions.

Property and Equipment—Property and equipment are stated at cost, less accumulated depreciation, and, at December 31, 2023, are composed of the following:

	Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	Net Book Value
Land and improvements	\$ 2,998,999	\$ 322,531	\$ 2,676,468
Buildings and improvements	25,767,407	6,566,859	19,200,548
Machinery and other equipment	14,212,421	12,243,234	1,969,187
Construction in process	<u>205,869</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>205,869</u>
Total	<u>\$ 43,184,696</u>	<u>\$ 19,132,624</u>	<u>\$ 24,052,072</u>

Depreciation is computed generally on the straight-line method over the estimated useful life of assets, which range from three to 50 years.

Contributions—DAV recognizes contributions when cash, securities, or other assets; an unconditional promise to give; or a notification of a beneficial interest is received. Conditional promises to give—that is, those with a measurable performance or other barrier and a right of return—are not recognized until the conditions on which they depend have been met.

Contributions received are recorded as support with or without donor restrictions depending on the existence and the nature of any donor restrictions. All contributions are considered available for unrestricted use, unless specifically restricted by the donor. Support that is restricted by the donor is reported as an increase in net assets with donor restrictions. Donated assets are recorded at their fair market value at the time of the gift.

Revenue Recognition from Exchange Transactions—DAV has multiple revenue streams that are accounted for as exchange transactions including sponsorships, cause marketing revenue, rental income, recycling income, and royalties. Revenue from these sources is recognized as services are performed or once the performance obligations are complete. Such amounts are included within the total revenue line within the statement of activities.

Net Assets without Donor Restrictions—All contributions and bequests without donor restrictions are resources available to support DAV’s operations.

Net Assets with Donor Restrictions—Net assets with donor restrictions consist of assets whose use is limited by donor-imposed, time, and/or purpose restrictions.

DAV reports gifts of cash and other assets as revenue with donor restrictions if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished, the net assets are reclassified as net assets without donor restriction and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Some net assets with donor restrictions include a stipulation that assets provided be maintained in perpetuity while permitting DAV to expend the income generated by the assets in accordance with the provision of additional donor-imposed stipulations.

Contributed Nonfinancial Assets—For the year ended December 31, 2023, contributed nonfinancial assets included contributed services and facilities and contributed media and materials. See respective accounting policy below for details on valuation techniques and inputs. Should additional material nonfinancial assets be received, they would be separately recognized within the statement of activities and disclosed within the notes to the financial statements.

Contributed Services and Facilities—DAV operates extensive programs through which volunteers contribute many hours of service to veterans. The 846,500 hours that are donated to DAV’s Transportation Network at the VA during 2023, and the 2023 donated hours of Department and Chapter Service Officers through the Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP) are used to tabulate contributed services. Using a value per hour of \$31.80 developed by Independent Sector, an organization that provides oversight to nonprofit organizations in America, the value of these hours contributed to the DAV’s Transportation Network and LVAP program is \$26,918,702. This value, together with the value of certain contributed facilities of \$3,179,559, is estimated based on the average national office rental cost per square foot.

DAV also works directly with veteran legal clinics who assist DAV and veterans with pro bono legal services. These no cost professional legal services support DAV’s mission and a veteran’s ability to obtain access to benefits they may be entitled to as a result of their military service. DAV’s end-to-end involvement in this program includes the identification of the specific legal services needed by veterans, assisting in the funding needed to identify and establish the various legal services that can be offered, and working with the veteran to ensure the legal services are provided. Contributed services from attorneys are valued at the estimated fair value based on hours incurred and current rates for similar legal services. The total value of legal contributed services for 2023 was \$9,241,636.

In instances where DAV solely acts as an intermediary by connecting veterans to legal clinics that may be willing to serve them, and the decision about whether and how to service the specific individual rests with the legal clinics, no contributed services revenue is recorded.

These contributed services are nonfinancial asset contributions, and are recorded as support and expenses in the accompanying statement of activities and statement of functional expenses. Based on the nature of these contributions, they did not contain an associated donor restriction.

Contributed Media and Materials—DAV produces public service announcements through various mediums (television, radio, digital, print, out of home), of which approximately \$105.4 million was

donated and aired through independent third parties during 2023. The value of the donated media is provided through an independent third party utilizing an estimated market value for each type of medium. The most significant medium is television. Estimated market values for television announcements are determined using various inputs, including length of spot, city, station, day part, and industry media cost data. The value of contributed media and materials, which is a nonfinancial asset contribution, is recorded as support and expenses in the accompanying statement of activities and statement of functional expenses. Based on the nature of these contributions, they did not contain an associated donor restriction.

Salaries Expense—The salaries expense in the accompanying financial statements includes the cost of all national service officers and their support staff who work directly with veterans and their dependents in providing counseling and representation in obtaining benefits and services. This expense also includes DAV's administrative and support staffs.

Income Taxes—As a not-for-profit service organization, DAV has received a determination from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that it is exempt from federal income tax as a 501(c)(4) organization. Contributions made to DAV are tax deductible by the contributor as provided in Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Use of Estimates—The preparation of the financial statements in accordance with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosures of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements, and the reported amounts of support, revenues, and expenses during the reporting period. Actual amounts could differ from those estimates.

Allocation of Expenses—The financial statements report certain categories of expenses that are attributable to one or more programs or supporting services of DAV. Those expenses include building maintenance, information technology and general administrative services. Building maintenance expenses are allocated based on a square footage basis; the information technology and general administrative services expenses are allocated based on the percentage of time tracked by department utilized.

Allocation of Joint Costs—The allocation of joint costs is based on the specific content of the qualifying material or media. In 2023, DAV incurred joint costs of \$52,874,871 for informational materials and activities that included fund-raising appeals. Of those costs, \$26,433,270 were allocated to public awareness outreach (program services) and \$26,441,601 were allocated to fund-raising costs.

3. LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Under the bylaws of DAV, any eligible person may become a life member. Amounts paid for membership are placed in separate life membership accounts and invested; the only withdrawals permitted from these accounts are amounts required to pay chapter, department, and national (DAV) per capita dues for services to be provided to the life members. Generally, life membership assets for DAV National Headquarters per capita dues are transferred to the general assets of DAV at the beginning of the membership year (July 1) and recognized as revenue in the statement of activities. The per capita chapter and department dues are distributed at the beginning of the membership year. The reserve for future distribution of membership dues represents the liability for the future life membership distributions to DAV National Headquarters, departments, and chapters to assist with providing member services.

The changes during 2023 in the reserve for future distribution of life membership dues are summarized below:

Balance—January 1, 2022	<u>\$ 43,733,311</u>
Additions:	
Membership dues received	5,893,211
Other income	<u>185,179</u>
Total additions	<u>6,078,390</u>
Distribution of membership dues:	
National headquarters	3,908,415
Local chapters	1,277,038
State departments	1,109,494
Other expense	<u>158,592</u>
Total distribution of membership dues	<u>6,453,539</u>
Net investment return	<u>5,959,453</u>
Balance—December 31, 2023	<u>\$ 49,317,615</u>

4. FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENTS

ASC 820, *Fair Value Measurements and Disclosures*, provides a framework for measuring fair value. This framework provides a fair value hierarchy that prioritizes the inputs to valuation techniques used to measure fair value, as follows: Level 1, which refers to securities valued using unadjusted quoted prices from active markets for identical assets; Level 2, which refers to securities not traded on an active market but for which observable market inputs are readily available; and Level 3, which refers to securities valued based on significant unobservable inputs. Assets are classified in their entirety based on the lowest level of input that is significant to the fair value measurement.

Asset Valuation Techniques—Valuation techniques used maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs. The following is a description of the valuation methodologies used for general fund, life fund, and pension plan assets recorded at fair value. There have been no changes in the methodologies used at December 31, 2023.

Cash equivalents, composed of money market funds, are categorized as Level 1. Such investments are valued at cost, which approximates fair value. The money market fund represents DAV's shares in a registered investment company's fund.

US government securities (US Treasury notes), common stocks, and exchange-traded funds (ETFs), categorized as Level 1, are valued at the closing price reported in the active market in which the individual security is traded.

Certificates of Deposit and Commercial paper, categorized as Level 2, are valued at fair value, which approximates amortized cost.

Municipal and corporate bonds, categorized as Level 2, are valued using third-party pricing services. These services may use, for example, model-based pricing methods that utilize observable market data as inputs. Broker-dealer bids or quotes of securities with similar characteristics may also be used.

Shares of registered investment companies (mutual funds), categorized as Level 1, are valued at quoted market prices that represent the net asset value of shares held at year-end.

Interest rate swap agreement is classified within Level 2 of the valuation hierarchy. The fair value is estimated using forward-looking interest rate curves and discounted cash flows that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data.

Private equity funds are classified within Level 3 of the valuation hierarchy due to a lack of trading in active markets and a lack of observable inputs in measuring fair value.

The major categories of general fund financial assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis as of December 31, 2023, are as follows:

Asset Category	Fair Value Measurements Using			Total
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)	
Cash equivalents	\$ 6,283,571	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,283,571
Certificates of Deposit	-	2,916,530	-	2,916,530
Commercial Paper	-	1,093,488	-	1,093,488
US government securities	9,006,256	-	-	9,006,256
Corporate bonds	-	84,310,978	-	84,310,978
Municipal bonds	-	1,493,885	-	1,493,885
Common stocks	63,506,467	-	-	63,506,467
Private equity funds	-	-	2,868,404	2,868,404
Mutual funds/ETFs:				
Domestic fixed-income funds	72,103,236	-	-	72,103,236
Domestic equity funds/ETFs	162,029,728	-	-	162,029,728
International equity funds	70,964,121	-	-	70,964,121
International fixed income funds	3,384	-	-	3,384
Real estate equity funds	9,568,769	-	-	9,568,769
Total mutual funds/ETFs	314,669,238	-	-	314,669,238
Total general fund assets	<u>\$393,465,532</u>	<u>\$89,814,881</u>	<u>\$2,868,404</u>	<u>\$486,148,817</u>
Interest rate swap agreement	\$ -	\$ 355,159	\$ -	\$ 355,159

The major categories of life membership fund financial assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis as of December 31, 2023, are as follows:

Asset Category	Fair Value Measurements Using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Total
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 339,327	\$ -	\$ 339,327
Corporate bonds	-	6,519,635	6,519,635
Common stocks	5,654,033	-	5,654,033
Mutual funds/ETFs:			
Domestic fixed-income funds	6,994,840	-	6,994,840
Domestic equity funds/ETFs	16,647,175	-	16,647,175
International equity funds	8,843,905	-	8,843,905
Real estate equity funds	1,340,489	-	1,340,489
Total mutual funds/ETFs	<u>33,826,409</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>33,826,409</u>
Total life membership fund assets	<u>\$ 39,819,769</u>	<u>\$ 6,519,635</u>	<u>\$ 46,339,404</u>

5. PENSION PLAN, POSTRETIREMENT BENEFITS AND OTHER BENEFITS

Pension Plan—DAV has a defined benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees and certain employees of Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary (DAVA). Benefits are based on years of service and employees' compensation. Contributions are intended to fully fund, over a period of seven years, the benefits attributed to service to date based on market interest rates established by the IRS. In 2023, DAV funded amounts in accordance with the recommended actuarially determined contribution amount. Contributions to the plan are based on the unit credit actuarial cost method.

Other Postretirement Benefit Plans—DAV provides certain health care and life insurance benefits (other postretirement benefits) for its retired employees and their spouses as well as certain retired employees and their spouses of DAVA. Substantially, all of DAV's employees may become eligible for these benefits if they have completed 20 years of service upon retirement. The post-Medicare retiree medical benefits are now a health reimbursement account (HRA).

DAV offers Medicare-eligible retirees access to health care coverage through a private exchange and provides an HRA to subsidize benefits. DAV established a catastrophic HRA with \$75,000 aggregate limit to cover catastrophic prescription drug expenses incurred by qualifying participants.

Summarized information for the plans as of December 31, 2023, measurement date is as follows:

	Pension	Other Postretirement Benefits
Accumulated benefit obligation	<u>\$ 64,069,595</u>	<u>\$ -</u>
Projected benefit obligation (PBO)	\$ 69,975,881	\$ 38,940,145
Accumulated postretirement benefit obligation (APBO)	-	-
Fair value of plan assets	<u>(64,851,018)</u>	<u>-</u>
Unfunded status recognized	<u>\$ 5,124,863</u>	<u>\$ 38,940,145</u>

Summarized information of the pension and other postretirement benefits plans for the year ended December 31, 2023, is as follows:

	Pension	Other Postretirement Benefits
Components of net periodic benefit cost:		
Service cost	\$ 3,449,128	\$ 861,882
Interest cost	3,189,457	1,830,262
Expected return on assets	(3,924,481)	-
Amortization of net loss	967,372	(271,067)
Amortization of prior service cost (benefit)	<u>-</u>	<u>(4,033,594)</u>
Net periodic benefit cost (benefit)	<u>\$ 3,681,476</u>	<u>\$ (1,612,517)</u>
Components of pension and postretirement benefit obligation adjustment:		
Amortization of prior service cost (benefit)	\$ -	\$ (4,033,594)
Amortization of net loss	967,372	(271,067)
Actuarial net (gain)/loss during the year	<u>1,847,376</u>	<u>(1,862,635)</u>
Pension and postretirement benefit obligation adjustment	<u>\$ 2,814,748</u>	<u>\$ (6,167,296)</u>

Net periodic benefit cost of \$3,639,507 (offset by \$41,969 reimbursed by DAVA) is included in expenses and pension and postretirement benefit obligation adjustment of \$(3,352,548) is included in other changes in net assets in the accompanying statement of activities.

For purposes of year end disclosure, the following changes were made to the actuarial assumptions used in the valuation of the Pension Plan:

- The single equivalent discount rate changed from 5.18% to 4.96% based on the pension plan's expected benefit payouts and the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) above median yield curve as of December 31, 2023.
- PEP conversion interest rates were updated to the same yield curve rates used to determine the obligation under the spot rate method.

These changes had the cumulative impact of decreasing the recorded projected benefit obligation by \$938,000.

For purposes of year end disclosure, the following changes were made to the actuarial assumptions used in the valuation of the Other Postretirement Benefits Plan - the discount rate was updated to 5.02% for the January 1, 2023 actuarial valuation. Previously, a discount rate of 5.25% was used. This change had the cumulative effect of increasing the recorded projected benefit obligation by \$1,143,317.

Amounts not yet recognized as a component of periodic pension and other postretirement benefits cost at December 31, 2023, are as follows:

	Pension	Other Postretirement Benefits
Prior service cost (benefit)	\$ -	\$ (18,850,327)
Net actuarial loss (gain)	<u>13,380,295</u>	<u>(6,123,802)</u>
Amounts recognized as reduction (increase) in unrestricted net assets	<u>\$ 13,380,295</u>	<u>\$ (24,974,129)</u>

	Pension	Other Postretirement Benefits
For the year ended December 31, 2023:		
Benefit expense (net periodic pension benefit cost of \$3,681,476, offset by \$41,969 reimbursed by DAVA)	\$ 3,639,507	\$ (1,612,517)
Actual return/(loss) on plan assets	8,365,692	
Employer contribution	3,500,000	1,930,578
Plan participants' contributions		71,841
Benefits paid	5,875,611	2,002,419

Weighted-average rate assumptions used for the
December 31 valuation—for year-end benefit obligation:

Discount rate	4.96 %	5.02 %
Rate of compensation increase	4.50 %	4.50 %

For the year-end benefit obligation, the Pri-2012 Total Employee and Retiree Mortality Table with Mortality Improvement Scale MP-2021 was utilized.

	Pension	Other Postretirement Benefits
For annual benefit cost:		
Discount rate	5.18 %	5.25 %
Discount rate—PBO normal cost	5.24	N/A
Rate of compensation increase	4.50	4.50
Expected return on plan assets	7.00	N/A

For the annual benefit cost, the Pri-2012 Total Employee and Retiree Morality Tables (base year 2012) with Mortality Improvement Scale MP-2021 was utilized.

The APBO and related benefit costs are determined through the application of relevant actuarial assumptions. DAV anticipates the increase in its health care cost-trend rate to slow from 7.25% in 2023 to 4.75% in 2031, after which the trend rate is expected to stabilize.

DAV expects to contribute \$3.4 million to its pension plan in 2024.

DAV's pension plan investment allocation at December 31, 2023, is as follows:

Asset Category	Percentage of Plan Assets
Equity-based securities	54 %
Fixed-income securities	31
Real assets	3
Alternative	8
Cash and cash equivalents	<u>4</u>
 Total	 <u>100 %</u>

The primary objective of the investment policy is preservation of capital with an emphasis on long-term growth without undue exposure to risk and in recognition of the cash flow needs of the plan. The asset allocation ranges are: 42% to 59% equities, 20% to 35% fixed-income securities, 0% to 10% real assets, and 5% to 20% alternative strategies. Approximately, 0% to 13% of the combined investments are to be in money market or other liquid funds (cash requirements).

Pension plan financial assets are recorded at fair value using the measurement techniques outlined in Note 4. The major categories of pension plan financial assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis as of December 31, 2023, are as follows:

Asset Category	Fair Value Measurements Using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Total
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,658,724	\$ -	\$ 2,658,724
US government securities	2,448,071	-	2,448,071
US government agency notes	-	1,459,998	1,459,998
Municipal bonds	-	644,012	644,012
Corporate bonds	-	6,434,464	6,434,464
Common stocks:			
Real assets	<u>1,644,916</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,644,916</u>
Total common stocks	<u>1,644,916</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,644,916</u>
Mutual funds/ETFs:			
Equity-based securities	35,357,360	-	35,357,360
Fixed income	9,082,602	-	9,082,602
Alternative	<u>5,120,871</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,120,871</u>
Total mutual funds/ETFs	<u>49,560,833</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>49,560,833</u>
Total pension plan assets	<u>\$ 56,312,544</u>	<u>\$ 8,538,474</u>	<u>\$ 64,851,018</u>

In selecting the expected rate of return on pension plan assets, DAV considers historical rates of return for the type of investments the plan holds, as well as future market expectations. Expectations are then applied to the target asset allocation to arrive at a weighted average of expected returns for the pension plan's portfolio of assets.

The pension plan benefit payments, which reflect expected future service, as appropriate, are expected to be paid as follows:

Fiscal Years Ending	Benefit Payments
2024	\$ 3,984,704
2025	4,191,482
2026	4,603,687
2027	4,428,172
2028	5,738,712
2029–2033	34,562,662

DAV offers retirees access to health coverage through a private exchange and provides an HRA to subsidize benefits.

The other postretirement benefit payments, which reflect expected future service, as appropriate, are expected to be paid as follows:

Fiscal Years Ending	Benefit Payments
2024	\$ 2,594,489
2025	2,146,614
2026	2,229,753
2027	2,287,252
2028	2,287,105
2029–2033	12,211,544

DAV also maintains a defined contribution salary savings and investment plan for its employees. For qualified participating employees, DAV contributes a percentage of the employees' base salary. DAV's contributions in 2023 were \$2,553,942 and are included in employee benefits expense in the accompanying statement of functional expenses.

Paid Time Off (PTO) Plan and Trust—The PTO Plan is a welfare benefit plan. The Plan established a trust to fund paid time-off benefits for eligible employees of DAV. DAV Benefit Plan Administration Committee serves as the Plan administrator. Fifth Third Bank serves as the trustee of the Plan. The Plan is subject to the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA). PTO benefits are funded by the Sponsor contributions to the Plan's trust and are recorded upon distribution. DAV made contributions totaling \$4,325,000 in 2023. PTO participants can be part-time employees, which is anyone that works a minimum of 30 hours, and the benefit is prorated as compared to a full-time 40-hour employee. Remaining balances up to 40 hours of PTO are paid out at the end of each year. The Sponsor funds the Plan in sufficient amounts to cover currently payable benefits and estimated future benefits. Contributions to the Plan are deposited with a trustee. The PTO liability at December 31, 2023 was \$3.7 million and is included in accrued expenses in the statement of financial position.

PTO plan financial assets, included in prepaid and others in the statement of financial position, are recorded at fair value using the measurement techniques outlined in Note 4. The major categories of the PTO plan financial assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis as of December 31, 2023, are as follows:

Asset Category	Fair Value Measurements Using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Total
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 35,266	\$ -	\$ 35,266
Mutual funds/ETFs:			
Equity-based securities	2,578,199	-	2,578,199
Fixed income	995,121	-	995,121
Real assets	95,075	-	95,075
Total mutual funds/ETFs	3,668,395	-	3,668,395
Total PTO plan assets	\$ 3,703,661	\$ -	\$ 3,703,661

6. LOANS PAYABLE

On May 7, 2020, DAV entered into a loan agreement with a bank for a draw note in the amount of \$13 million to fund the construction of a new headquarters building. On the conversion date, September 30, 2021, the entire outstanding principal balance and all accrued and unpaid interests were converted to a term loan. The term loan is payable in monthly principal payments of \$216,667 plus interest starting November 1, 2021 through October 1, 2026, the maturity date. Interest is paid at a monthly variable rate of prime less 2.00% per annum. The outstanding balance on the note at December 31, 2023 was \$7,149,991.

The annual maturities of the loan for the years ending December 31 are as follows:

Fiscal Years Ending	
2024	\$ 2,600,004
2025	2,600,004
2026	1,949,983
Total	\$ 7,149,991

DAV is required under the loan agreement to comply with certain covenants, the most restrictive of these are to maintain its primary operating accounts with the bank and to maintain liquid assets of at least \$16 million. DAV is in compliance with all covenants as of December 31, 2023.

The fair value of the loans payable approximates the balance of \$7,149,991 as of December 31, 2023 and is classified as Level 2 within the fair value hierarchy.

7. LEASES

In February 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-02, Leases (Topic 842), which required recognition of rights and obligations from lease contracts longer than one year as assets and liabilities on the statement of financial position. For private companies and private not-for-profits, ASU No. 2016-02 was effective for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2021, however DAV did not have any material leases for the year-ended December 31, 2022.

In January 2023, DAV entered into a lease for office space for the National Service and Legislation Headquarters in Washington, D.C., under a finance lease, which is recorded as a right-of-use asset and lease liability. This lease contained concessions of a rent abatement and a tenant improvement allowance. DAV included these items in the determination of the right-of-use asset and the lease liabilities. The effects of these concessions have been reflected in lease expense on a straight-line basis over the expected lease term and any variable lease payments subsequent to establishing the lease liability are expensed as incurred.

Components of lease expense for the year ended December 31, 2023 were as follows:

Finance lease expense:	
Amortization of right-of-use assets	\$ 313,010
Lease operating expenses	289,347
Interest on finance lease liabilities	<u>263,466</u>
Total lease expense	<u>\$ 865,823</u>

The components of right-of-use assets and lease liabilities on the statement of financial position are as follows:

Lease assets and liabilities:	
Finance lease right-of-use assets	\$ 9,077,103
Finance lease liabilities	13,755,412

The remaining lease term and discount rate as of December 31, 2023 are as follows:

	Remaining Lease Term (In months)	Discount Rate
Finance lease	203	3.80 %

Maturities of the finance lease liability as of December 31, 2023 were as follows:

2024	\$ 920,463
2025	943,438
2026	966,998
2027	991,143
2028	1,015,873
2029 and thereafter	<u>14,251,452</u>
 Total payments	 19,089,367
 Less imputed interest	 <u>5,333,955</u>
 Total lease liability	 <u>\$ 13,755,412</u>

8. DERIVATIVE AND HEDGING ACTIVITIES

DAV has entered into an interest rate swap agreement with a commercial bank, effective April 30, 2020, to reduce the impact of changes in interest rates on its floating rate bonds (see note 6). The agreement effectively changes DAV’s interest rate exposure on its floating rate bonds due October 1, 2026 to a fixed 2.00% rate. The interest rate swap agreement matures at the same time the related loan matures.

Derivatives are held only for the purpose of hedging such risks, not for speculation. Generally, DAV enters into a hedging relationship such that changes in the fair values or cash flows of transactions being hedged are expected to be offset by corresponding changes in the values of the derivative. At December 31, 2023, hedging relationships exist for loan indebtedness and the exposure to variable cash flows related to variable rate debt. The fair value of the interest rate swap agreement is based on quotes provided by derivative specialists at DAV’s bank with whom these agreements were made.

The decrease in the fair value of the interest rate swap agreement of \$274,329 for the year ended December 31, 2023 is included in other changes in net assets in the statement of activities, decreasing net assets without donor restrictions.

9. COMPOSITION OF NET ASSETS WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS

Net assets with donor restrictions as of December 31, 2023, are restricted for the following purposes:

Subject to expenditure for a specified purpose:	
National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic	\$ 1,895,356
Service program	5,642,849
Capital campaign	700,000
Transportation Network	784,361
Scholarship program	30,183
National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic	21,580
Other	<u>438,968</u>
 Total subject to expenditure for a specified purpose	 9,513,297
 Endowments subject to DAV’s spending policy and appropriation	 <u>13,372,715</u>
 Total net assets with donor restrictions	 <u>\$ 22,886,012</u>

10. NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DONOR RESTRICTIONS

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of the passage of time or other events specified by donors. The net assets released from restrictions for the year ended December 31, 2023, are as follows:

Purpose restriction accomplished:	
Purpose restrictions funds:	
Service program	\$ 7,364,467
Employment program	1,771,064
Disaster relief	191,351
Transportation network	61,134
National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic	1,056,684
Camp Corral	800,000
National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic	276,345
DAV 5K events	315,392
Patriot Boot Camp	63,020
Other	<u>437,078</u>
Total purpose restrictions funds	12,336,535
Total endowment funds	<u>288,926</u>
Net assets released from donor restrictions	<u>\$ 12,625,461</u>

11. LIQUIDITY AND AVAILABILITY OF FINANCIAL ASSETS

DAV intends to operate within a prudent range of financial soundness and stability. DAV regularly monitors liquidity required to meet its operating needs and other contractual commitments, while also striving to maximize the investment of its available funds. DAV has various sources of liquidity at its disposal, including cash and cash equivalents and readily marketable debt and equity securities.

DAV forecasts its future cash flows annually and monitors actual activity monthly. For purposes of analyzing resources available to meet expenditures over a 12-month period, DAV considers all expenditures related to its ongoing program, fund-raising, general and administrative activities, and capital purchases. DAV's working capital and cash flows have seasonal variations during the year attributable to the timing of contribution solicitation campaigns. Campaign expenses paid and contributions received fluctuate monthly with a heavier concentration near calendar year-end. Bequests also vary from year to year.

DAV's investments are primarily unrestricted. DAV has an investment policy with primary goals of safeguarding its assets; maximizing return on the investments through interest, dividends, and appreciation of capital; and avoiding undue interest rate risk in the fixed-income portion of the portfolio. The overall asset allocation is 70% equities and liquid alternative investments and 30% fixed-income investments and cash equivalents.

The following reflects DAV’s financial assets at December 31, 2023, reduced by amounts not available for general use within one year of the statement of financial position date due to donor and purpose restrictions:

Total assets, excluding nonfinancial assets	\$ 563,173,158
Subtract: Life Membership Fund	(45,589,867)
Subtract: Donor-Restricted Endowment Fund	(13,372,715)
Subtract: Investments not available for general expenditures	<u>(1,364,366)</u>
 Financial assets available to meet cash needs for general expenditures within one year	 <u>\$ 502,846,210</u>

12. ENDOWMENT

DAV’s endowment (the “Endowment”) consists of approximately 25 individual funds established by donors to provide perpetual source of support for DAV’s activities. As required by GAAP, net assets associated with Endowment funds are classified and reported based on the existence of donor-imposed restrictions.

DAV’s Board of Directors has interpreted the KY Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA) as requiring the preservation of the fair value of the original gift as of the date of the donor-restricted endowment funds, unless there are explicit donor stipulations to the contrary. At December 31, 2023, there were no such donor stipulations. Because of this interpretation, DAV retained in perpetuity (a) the original value of initial and subsequent gift amounts donated to the endowment and (b) any accumulations to the endowment made in accordance with the direction of the applicable donor gift instrument at the time the accumulation is added. Donor-restricted amounts not retained in perpetuity are subject to appropriation for expenditure by DAV in a manner consistent with the standard of prudence prescribed by UPMIFA. DAV considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate or accumulate donor-restricted endowment funds:

- The duration and preservation of the endowment
- The purposes of DAV and the donor-restricted endowment
- General economic conditions
- The possible effect of inflation and deflation
- The expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments
- Other resources of DAV
- The investment policies of DAV

As of December 31, 2023, DAV had \$13,372,715 of donor-restricted, perpetually endowed net assets.

Investment and Spending Policies—DAV has an investment policy specific to its endowment, which is monitored by DAV’s management team and implemented by the investment manager. The investment policy statement describes the objective for the fund and sets ranges for asset allocation. The objective of the endowment is to preserve and enhance the real (inflation adjusted) purchasing power of the endowment assets consistent with agreed-upon levels of risk that a prudent person would take under various economic conditions. At a minimum, long-term rates of return should be equal to an amount sufficient to maintain the purchasing power of the endowment fund assets, to provide necessary capital to fund the spending policy, and to cover the costs of managing the endowment fund investments. The desired total return over a long-term basis (as measured on a five-year rolling period and full market cycle) is expected to exceed the rate of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price

Index, plus the spending rate plus investment expenses. Actual returns in any given year may vary from this amount. In light of this return requirement, the portfolio is constructed using a total return approach with a significant portion of the funds invested to seek growth of principal over time. The assets are invested for the long term, and a higher short-term volatility in these assets is expected and accepted. DAV limits its investment in so-called alternative investments to those that have daily liquidity (mutual funds and ETFs).

The following is a summary of the asset allocation guidelines, with allowable ranges for each asset type.

Asset Class	Lower Range	Target Weight	Upper Range
Equity	55 %	65 %	75 %
Fixed income	5	15	25
Real assets	3	10	15
Alternatives	3	7	11
Cash equivalents	-	3	13

DAV uses an endowment-spending formula based on total return of the investments for determining the amount to spend from the endowment fund each year. The appropriation is a maximum of 3% of the average market value of the trailing 12 quarters, calculated annually as of December 31 of each year. In establishing this policy, DAV considered the long-term expected return on its endowment fund investments and set the rate with the objective of maintaining the purchasing power of its donor-restricted permanent endowment funds over time. The endowment investment fund earned a positive return in 2023.

From time to time, certain donor-restricted endowment funds may have fair values less than the amount required to be maintained by donors or by law (underwater endowments). We have interpreted UPMIFA to permit spending from underwater endowments in accordance with prudent measures required under law. At December 31, 2023, funds with original gift values of \$12,365,741, fair values of \$13,372,715, and deficiencies of \$0 were reported in net assets with donor restrictions.

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2023, are as follows:

	With Donor Restriction
Endowment net assets—January 1, 2023	\$ 11,714,117
Contributions	
Withdrawals	(288,926)
Investment return—net	<u>1,947,524</u>
Endowment net assets—December 31, 2023	<u>\$ 13,372,715</u>

13. RELATED-PARTY TRANSACTIONS

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) National Service Foundation—Some members of DAV’s Board of Directors also serve on the Board of Directors for the DAV National Service Foundation (the “Foundation”). DAV also provides services to the Foundation, which puts DAV in the position to influence operating policies of the Foundation. The accompanying financial statements do not include the net assets (or changes therein) of the Foundation, which are held by the Foundation and available to DAV only through appropriation by the Foundation’s Board of Directors. The Foundation is a separate entity from DAV, operating under its own bylaws. Based upon financial statements at December 31, 2023, net assets of the Foundation were \$171,486,532. During 2023, DAV personnel assisted the Foundation on a limited basis in administering its business operations and fundraising program. For these services, DAV charged the Foundation \$131,572. DAV provides the Foundation with the use of facilities, equipment, and occasional magazine space at no charge.

In 2023, DAV contributed \$143,044 to The Columbia Trust, a fund with donor restrictions established by the Foundation, to provide funds for the service programs of needy DAV state departments and local chapters.

In 2023, the Foundation appropriated \$4,547,400 in support of DAV service program.

At December 31, 2023, the Foundation owed \$141,815 to DAV, which is recorded as accounts receivable in the accompanying statement of financial position.

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Charitable Service Trust—Some members of DAV’s Board of Directors also serve on the Board of Directors for Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Charitable Service Trust (the “Trust”). DAV also provides services to the Trust, which puts DAV in the position to influence operating policies of the Trust. The accompanying financial statements do not include the net assets (or changes therein) of the Trust, which are held by the Trust and available to DAV only through grants approved by the Trust’s Board of Directors. The Trust is a separate entity from DAV, operating under its own bylaws. Based upon financial statements at December 31, 2023, net assets of the Trust were \$58,332,375. DAV personnel assist the Trust on a limited basis in administering its business operations, fund-raising, and grant programs. For these personnel services, DAV charged the Trust \$199,266. DAV provides the Trust with the use of facilities, equipment, and occasional magazine space at no charge.

In 2023, the Trust appropriated the following in support of DAV programs and services which are recorded as support and revenue in the accompanying statement of activities:

Assistance to disabled veterans and their families	\$ 7,325,483
DAV Employment Program	1,863,805
DAV “Just B Kids” Scholarship	420,000
Transportation network	200,000
Veterans retreats	150,000
DAV Night Out Program	33,000
Patriot Boot Camp	25,000
Jesse Brown Youth Scholarship Program	25,000
DAV Disaster Relief	5,000
DAV National Convention	15,000
National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic	312,500
DAV Veteran Victory Challenge	2,500

At December 31, 2023, the Trust owed \$88,074 to DAV, which is recorded as a receivable in the accompanying statement of financial position.

Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary—DAV provides services to the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary (the “DAVA”), which puts DAV in the position to influence operating policies of DAVA. The accompanying financial statements do not include the net assets (or changes therein) of DAVA, which are held by DAVA. DAVA is a separate entity from DAV, operating under its own bylaws. Based upon financial statements at December 31, 2023, net assets of DAVA were \$9,662,508. DAVA occupies space in the DAV National Headquarters’ building and also uses certain office equipment owned by DAV. No fees are charged for such usage. The value of these contributed facilities is estimated to be \$20,659 in 2023.

Certain costs are paid by DAV on behalf of DAVA. In addition, DAV collects contributions on behalf of DAVA. At December 31, 2023, DAVA owed DAV \$99,180, the net of such costs less contributions of \$7,775, which is recorded as accounts receivable in the accompanying statement of financial position.

Disabled Veterans’ LIFE Memorial Foundation—Some members of DAV’s Board of Directors also serve on the Board of Directors for the Disabled Veterans’ LIFE Memorial Foundation (the “DVLMF”). DAV also provides services to the DVLMF, which puts DAV in the position to influence operating policies of the DVLMF. The accompanying financial statements do not include the net assets (or changes therein) of the unaudited DVLMF. The DVLMF is a separate entity from DAV, operating under its own bylaws. Based upon financial statements at December 31, 2023, net assets of the DVLMF were \$11,247. During 2023, DAV personnel assisted the DVLMF on a limited basis in administering its business operations, as well as providing the use of facilities and equipment at no charge.

14. COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENCIES

DAV is involved in certain legal actions arising in the ordinary course of its activities. Management believes that the ultimate liability, if any, with respect to these matters will not materially affect the financial position of DAV.

15. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

No other events have occurred after December 31, 2023, but before April 9, 2024, the date the financials were available to be issued, that require consideration as adjustments to, or disclosures in, the financial statements.

* * * * *

Committee on Credentials

Advisor: Douglas K. Wells Jr. and Michael Dobmeier

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Sullivan, Mason	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	30
	Williams, Jermeal	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	3
2	Stephenson, Scott	Delegate	NEW YORK	158
	Sylvester, Raymond	Alternate	NEW YORK	82
3	Apsaga, Stephen	Delegate	MAINE	1
	Douglass, Joshua	Alternate	MAINE	1
4	Watts, Michael	Delegate	NEW JERSEY	14
	Gould, Raymond	Alternate	DELAWARE	1
5	Komninos, Helen	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	15
	Gallucci, Leonard	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	15
6	Sabree, Joan	Delegate	MARYLAND	36
	Lopez Comas, Angel	Alternate	PUERTO RICO	3
7	Reed, Brenda	Delegate	FLORIDA	4
	Jackson, Jo Ann	Alternate	FLORIDA	109
8	Leger, Alfred	Delegate	LOUISIANA	19
	Walker, S. Wayne	Alternate	TENNESSEE	25
9	Cunningham, Willard	Delegate	SOUTH CAROLINA	13
	Hunter, James	Alternate	NORTH CAROLINA	26
10	Fogg, Brian	Delegate	MICHIGAN	94
11	Headen, Richard	Delegate	OHIO	1
	Stith, Michael	Alternate	OHIO	35
12	Fox, Stacy	Delegate	WISCONSIN	17
	Self, Byron	Alternate	ILLINOIS	24
13	Auld, Crystal	Delegate	INDIANA	3
	Greer, DeAndre	Alternate	INDIANA	3
14	Tobin, Warren	Delegate	NORTH DAKOTA	31
	Francis, Dan	Alternate	SOUTH DAKOTA	1
15	Kodad, Rhonda	Delegate	NEBRASKA	47
	Toms, Jerry	Alternate	IOWA	20
16	Mendoza, Jose	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	12
	Kurtz, Eric	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	20
17	Greer, Charles	Delegate	WYOMING	1
	Portillo, Maurice	Alternate	NEW MEXICO	5
18	Ingraham, John	Delegate	ARIZONA	26
	Brewer, Shawn	Alternate	NEVADA	1
19	Mullins, Cali	Delegate	WASHINGTON	2
	Berger, Daniel	Alternate	OREGON	8
20	Reed, Donald	Delegate	TEXAS	78
	Haessig, Dennis	Alternate	TEXAS	157
21	Brown, Vici	Delegate	OKLAHOMA	43
	White, Fred	Alternate	OKLAHOMA	7

Committee on General Resolutions and Membership

Advisor: Marquis Barefield and Naomi Mathis

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Bronson, Robert	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	30
	Kinsman, Robert	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	47
2	Russell, Judith	Delegate	NEW YORK	126
	Casiano, Jonathan	Alternate	NEW YORK	23
3	Sloan, Lisa	Delegate	VERMONT	4
	Herrington, Martha	Alternate	VERMONT	4
4	Werlich, Ronald	Delegate	CONNECTICUT	47
	Guiro, Susan	Alternate	NEW JERSEY	24
5	Donadini, James	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	81
	Arnold, Phil	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	81
6	Shatney, Kimberly	Delegate	WEST VIRGINIA	32
	Cruz, Jorge	Alternate	PUERTO RICO	6
7	Dunn, Michael	Delegate	FLORIDA	109
	Dunn, John	Alternate	FLORIDA	109
8	Durand, B.	Delegate	LOUISIANA	7
	Wood, Thomas	Alternate	ALABAMA	94
9	Attzs, Leroy	Delegate	NORTH CAROLINA	46
	Small, Carolyn	Alternate	GEORGIA	33
10	Bowens, Rodney	Delegate	MICHIGAN	1
11	Cunningham, Aaron	Delegate	OHIO	1
	Bailey, James	Alternate	OHIO	117
12	Belmont, Barbara	Delegate	WISCONSIN	17
	Corsello, S	Alternate	ILLINOIS	86
13	Higgins, Robbin	Delegate	KENTUCKY	19
	Ewing, Lee	Alternate	KENTUCKY	89
14	Walker, John	Delegate	MINNESOTA	2
	Walsh, Timothy	Alternate	SOUTH DAKOTA	1
15	Caldwell, Gerald	Delegate	MISSOURI	2
	Butz, Timothy	Alternate	NEBRASKA	47
16	Hernandez, Armando	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	1
	Pagdilao, Allen	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	60
17	Patten, James	Delegate	UTAH	8
	Harris, Grant	Alternate	COLORADO	26
18	Fisher, James	Delegate	NEVADA	15
	Nogar, Bruce	Alternate	ARIZONA	14
19	Kurtz, Karl	Delegate	IDAHO	2
	Walker, Ross	Alternate	WASHINGTON	5
20	Dees, Kathaleena	Delegate	TEXAS	233
	Beason, Betty	Alternate	TEXAS	240
21	Chisum, Scott	Delegate	OKLAHOMA	88
	Plunk, Bill	Alternate	ARKANSAS	7

Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights

Advisor: Joy Ilem and Shawn Hope

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Gayle-Bennett, Andrea	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	64
	McGreevy, Eugene	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	11
2	Steinwandel, Norbert	Delegate	NEW YORK	135
	McGowan, Timothy	Alternate	NEW YORK	120
3	Slininger, Kimberly	Delegate	MAINE	6
	Douglass, Joshua	Alternate	MAINE	1
4	Flynn, Benjamin	Delegate	DELAWARE	1
	Schnepf, George	Alternate	NEW JERSEY	56
5	Fiumara, Philip	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	76
	Scott, Delorico	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	76
6	Barkley, Kimberly	Delegate	VIRGINIA	27
	DuBose, Danny	Alternate	MARYLAND	13
7	Ayala, Thomas	Delegate	FLORIDA	1
	Macko, Richard	Alternate	FLORIDA	109
8	Hughes, Albert	Delegate	TENNESSEE	45
	Matthews, Leroy	Alternate	MISSISSIPPI	48
9	Wilner, Brian	Delegate	SOUTH CAROLINA	44
10	Gonzales, Beth	Delegate	MICHIGAN	102
11	Hartman, William	Delegate	OHIO	11
	Turner, Steven	Alternate	OHIO	35
12	Labelle, Al	Delegate	WISCONSIN	57
	Myers, Robert	Alternate	ILLINOIS	42
13	Long, Jerry	Delegate	KENTUCKY	89
	Stoyonovich, Michael	Alternate	KENTUCKY	32
14	Dilks, Trent	Delegate	MINNESOTA	12
	Fisher, Richard	Delegate	KANSAS	11
15	Lewis, Travis	Alternate	MISSOURI	17
	Wilson, Gerald	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	154
16	Fox, Jamie	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	48
	Mitchell, Edward	Delegate	NEW MEXICO	5
17	Dasing, Kevin	Alternate	NEW MEXICO	38
	Ballentine, James	Delegate	ARIZONA	1
18	Armenta, Travis	Alternate	NEVADA	1
	Murphy, Daniel	Delegate	IDAHO	22
19	Parisi, Kari	Alternate	OREGON	12
	Westfall-Haessig, Marshal	Delegate	TEXAS	157
20	Williams, Leisa	Delegate	OKLAHOMA	66
	Clark, Andrew	Alternate	OKLAHOMA	88

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

Advisor: Edward Hartman and Robert Renyolds

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Nadeau, Philip	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	4
	Hart, John	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	11
2	Quinones, Pedro	Delegate	NEW YORK	120
	Lee, Tony	Alternate	NEW YORK	126
3	Boisvert, Ernest	Delegate	RHODE ISLAND	12
	Marino, Robert	Alternate	RHODE ISLAND	21
4	Sanders, Kevin	Delegate	CONNECTICUT	15
	Jones, David	Alternate	NEW JERSEY	42
5	Cudworth, Robert	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	1
	Cudworth, Robert	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	1
6	Whitfield, Mattie	Delegate	MARYLAND	33
	Lozano, Juan	Alternate	PUERTO RICO	7
7	McGuire, Bernard (Bj)	Delegate	FLORIDA	123
	Roehm, Mark	Alternate	FLORIDA	4
8	Franks, Sandra	Delegate	LOUISIANA	30
	Miller, Vernon	Alternate	MISSISSIPPI	17
9	Reynolds, Robert	Delegate	SOUTH CAROLINA	30
	Walton, Thomas	Alternate	SOUTH CAROLINA	39
10	Lee, Rolly	Delegate	MICHIGAN	94
11	Crawford, James	Delegate	OHIO	52
	Henninger, Joseph	Alternate	OHIO	35
12	Gavin, JoAnn	Delegate	WISCONSIN	21
	Desimone, Anthony	Alternate	ILLINOIS	42
13	Black, Jason	Delegate	INDIANA	52
	Carnagey, Robert	Alternate	INDIANA	17
14	Petersen, Debra	Alternate	MINNESOTA	20
15	Murphy, Robert	Delegate	KANSAS	28
	Silva, Eligio	Alternate	MISSOURI	2
16	Moseley, Joseph	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	12
	Sales, Steven	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	45
17	Timmerman, Timothy	Delegate	NEW MEXICO	9
	Johnson, Larry	Alternate	NEW MEXICO	3
18	Way, Jon	Delegate	NEVADA	13
	Cooper, Kevin	Alternate	ARIZONA	20
19	Joyner, Peris	Delegate	WASHINGTON	2
	Baublitz, Tristian	Alternate	IDAHO	17
20	Franklin, Anita	Delegate	TEXAS	128
	Saldana, Karen	Alternate	TEXAS	233
21	Pandos, Ronald	Delegate	OKLAHOMA	32
	Jackson, Donald	Alternate	ARKANSAS	7

Committee on Employment

Advisor: Ryan Burgos and Jeremy Yost

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Devine, Dennis	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	3
	Santiago, Robert	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	3
2	Bergmann, David	Delegate	NEW YORK	15
	Seltz, Robert	Alternate	NEW YORK	120
3	Backus, Denis	Delegate	VERMONT	3
	Borrazas, Richard	Alternate	NEW HAMPSHIRE	18
4	Walker, Michael	Delegate	NEW JERSEY	24
	Cintron, Miguel	Alternate	CONNECTICUT	7
5	Morelli, Richard	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	11
	Wyatt, Danny	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	25
6	Gregory, Lisa	Delegate	VIRGINIA	7
	Suarez-Perez, Carmen	Alternate	PUERTO RICO	16
7	Bueno, Eduard	Delegate	FLORIDA	4
	Gore, Kenneth	Alternate	FLORIDA	13
8	Menton, Will	Delegate	TENNESSEE	70
9	Bradley, Derwin	Delegate	SOUTH CAROLINA	20
	Hale, Michael	Alternate	SOUTH CAROLINA	13
10	Zielke, Jason	Delegate	MICHIGAN	114
11	Gidden, William Lee	Delegate	OHIO	35
	Wittneben, Jeffrey	Alternate	OHIO	9
12	Houghland, Donnie	Delegate	ILLINOIS	51
	Wendt, Lawrence	Alternate	ILLINOIS	7
13	Causey, Tommie	Delegate	KENTUCKY	89
	Pruitt, Anthony	Alternate	KENTUCKY	19
14	Hall, Joseph	Delegate	NORTH DAKOTA	3
	Batcho, Richard	Alternate	MINNESOTA	38
15	Kodad, Darell	Delegate	NEBRASKA	47
	Coop, Warren	Alternate	IOWA	20
16	Skoda, Joseph	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	82
	Boatwright, David	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	154
17	Prestwich, Stephen	Delegate	UTAH	7
	Birge, William	Alternate	NEW MEXICO	5
18	Forkner, Carl	Delegate	ARIZONA	8
	Jordan, Cledith	Alternate	NEVADA	13
19	Gunno, Stanley	Delegate	WASHINGTON	2
	Clark, Maurace	Alternate	WASHINGTON	47
20	Reed, Janet	Delegate	TEXAS	240
	Woodfork, Robert	Alternate	TEXAS	17
21	Kirk, Darlene	Delegate	OKLAHOMA	94
	Dunning, William	Alternate	OKLAHOMA	32

Committee on Hospital and Voluntary Services

Advisor: Jon Retzer and John Kleindienst

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Egan, William	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	57
	Cook, Charles	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	3
2	Du, Philip	Delegate	NEW YORK	144
	Stephenson, Sherry	Alternate	NEW YORK	158
3	Gaddis, Joyce	Delegate	MAINE	6
	Coffin, Donna	Alternate	RHODE ISLAND	21
4	Taylor, Juliet	Delegate	CONNECTICUT	13
	Pacitto, Terry	Alternate	CONNECTICUT	13
5	Johnson, Leonard	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	15
	Hargrove, Marion	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	15
6	Greathouse, Adam	Delegate	WEST VIRGINIA	2
	Felder, M.Tyrelle	Alternate	VIRGINIA	33
7	Keckler, Mary Ann	Delegate	FLORIDA	67
	Taylor, James	Alternate	FLORIDA	4
8	Johnston, Rebecca	Delegate	TENNESSEE	22
	Sutterfield, Mike	Alternate	ALABAMA	9
9	Jimmerson, Burl	Delegate	GEORGIA	33
	Long, Larry	Alternate	SOUTH CAROLINA	4
10	Deck, Dwayne	Delegate	MICHIGAN	1
11	Mitchell, Arlinda	Delegate	OHIO	35
	Hanneman, Dennis	Alternate	OHIO	77
12	Lillis, Patricia	Delegate	WISCONSIN	57
	Couture, Kenneth	Alternate	ILLINOIS	42
13	Peek, Donald	Delegate	INDIANA	52
	Cardinale, Scott	Alternate	KENTUCKY	173
14	Heinz, Robert	Delegate	MINNESOTA	2
	Hanson, Jack	Alternate	SOUTH DAKOTA	1
15	Weaver, Julie	Delegate	MISSOURI	43
	Jakub, Krista	Alternate	NEBRASKA	47
16	Johnson, Kirk	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	85
	Baratta, Jeremy	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	1
17	Hargrave, Allyson	Delegate	UTAH	1
	Weber, Eugene	Alternate	NEW MEXICO	33
18	Aragon, Jose	Delegate	NEVADA	1
	Torres-Ireland, Rexana	Alternate	ARIZONA	14
19	Hamilton, Alice	Delegate	OREGON	1
	Richards, Sherri	Alternate	OREGON	1
20	Jolly, Jw	Delegate	TEXAS	44
	Phillips, Samuel	Alternate	TEXAS	169
21	Leday-Mauney, Merline	Delegate	OKLAHOMA	56
	Dunning, William	Alternate	OKLAHOMA	32

Committee on Nomination of National Officers

Advisor: Albert Church and Joseph Johnston

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Stack, Daniel	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	3
	Valila, Michael	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	4
2	Sander, Shannon	Delegate	NEW YORK	15
	Martin, Michael	Alternate	NEW YORK	82
3	Burns, Gary	Delegate	MAINE	1
	Burns, David	Alternate	MAINE	19
4	Donberger, Mark	Delegate	DELAWARE	1
	Maeby, Ronnie	Alternate	CONNECTICUT	2
5	Kauffman, Joseph	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	113
	Borders, Amber	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	76
6	Ferrer, Rodney	Delegate	PUERTO RICO	21
	Ramey, Dwayne	Alternate	VIRGINIA	26
7	Joyner, Dennis	Delegate	FLORIDA	16
	Wolfe, Kenneth	Alternate	FLORIDA	101
8	Wenthe, Kevin	Delegate	LOUISIANA	20
	Turner, Daniel	Alternate	ALABAMA	28
9	Downer, Doris	Delegate	GEORGIA	92
	Vaughters, Reginald L	Alternate	SOUTH CAROLINA	20
10	Tucker, Lolita	Delegate	MICHIGAN	114
11	Uetterling, David	Delegate	OHIO	36
	Wright, Lenon	Alternate	OHIO	116
12	Huckaby, Eric	Delegate	ILLINOIS	17
	Koehler, Tiffany	Alternate	WISCONSIN	19
13	McGinnis, Eric	Delegate	INDIANA	3
	Burgess, Marc	Alternate	KENTUCKY	19
14	Whitehead, Stephen	Delegate	MINNESOTA	40
	Parsetich, Joseph	Alternate	MONTANA	2
15	Bahl, Amy	Delegate	IOWA	6
	Myron, Karin	Alternate	KANSAS	28
16	Sousa, Melissa	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	59
	Williamson, Diane	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	7
17	Estes, Jerry	Delegate	UTAH	14
	Carmona, John	Alternate	COLORADO	50
18	Geary, James	Delegate	ARIZONA	20
	Washington, Jerome	Alternate	NEVADA	1
19	Janus, Wanda	Delegate	OREGON	1
	Alexander, Timothy	Alternate	WASHINGTON	5
20	Saldana, Raymond	Delegate	TEXAS	233
	Collins, Perry	Alternate	TEXAS	139
21	Halford-Pandos, Jerletta	Delegate	OKLAHOMA	32
	Plunk, Bobby	Alternate	ARKANSAS	10

National Executive Committee

DISTRICT	MEMBER NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT	CHAPTER
1	Whitty, Francis	Delegate	MASSACHUSETTS	3
	Olson, Debora	Alternate	MASSACHUSETTS	85
2	Martin, Michael	Delegate	NEW YORK	82
	Sander, Shannon	Alternate	NEW YORK	15
3	Gaddis, Joyce	Delegate	MAINE	6
	Sloan, Lisa	Alternate	VERMONT	4
4	Donberger, Mark	Delegate	DELAWARE	1
	Maebry, Ronnie	Alternate	CONNECTICUT	2
5	Johnson, Leonard	Delegate	PENNSYLVANIA	15
	Hines, William	Alternate	PENNSYLVANIA	3
6	Miller, Nachee	Delegate	DC	3
	Cruz, Jorge	Alternate	PUERTO RICO	4
7	Keckler, Mary Ann	Delegate	FLORIDA	67
	Ayala, Thomas	Alternate	FLORIDA	1
8	Harman, Michael	Delegate	TENNESSEE	39
	Gilliam, Barbara	Alternate	TENNESSEE	42
9	Booker, Leon	Delegate	GEORGIA	1
	Solomon, Robert	Alternate	GEORGIA	1
10	Barenbrugge, Ricky	Delegate	MICHIGAN	19
	Tucker, Lolita	Alternate	MICHIGAN	114
11	Hanneman, Dennis	Delegate	OHIO	77
	Bailey, James	Alternate	OHIO	117
12	Reynolds, Alfred	Delegate	ILLINOIS	17
	Huckaby, Eric	Alternate	ILLINOIS	17
13	McGinnis, Eric	Delegate	INDIANA	3
	Carnagey, Robert	Alternate	INDIANA	17
14	Berndt, Scott	Delegate	MINNESOTA	39
	Fields, Ellsworth	Alternate	MINNESOTA	28
15	Gerke, David	Delegate	MISSOURI	2
	Jakub, Jamie	Alternate	NEBRASKA	20
16	Kerr, Michael	Delegate	CALIFORNIA	70
	Ramos, Enrique	Alternate	CALIFORNIA	70
17	Estes, Jerry	Delegate	UTAH	14
	Carmona, John	Alternate	COLORADO	50
18	Brown, Don	Delegate	HAWAII	7
	Cox, Ronald	Alternate	ARIZONA	26
19	Marker, Brigitte	Delegate	OREGON	12
	Janus, Wanda	Alternate	OREGON	1
20	Shook, Paul	Delegate	TEXAS	3
	Green, James	Alternate	TEXAS	187
21	Vacant	Delegate		
	Schermer, Anna	Alternate	OKLAHOMA	94

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION

August 6, 2024

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The Second Business Session of the Disabled American Veterans 102nd National Convention convened in the convened in Room West 301B through D of the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on Tuesday morning, August 6, 2024, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock, a.m., by National Commander Nancy G. Espinosa.

COMMANDER NANCY G. ESPINOSA: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: The convention will please come to order. As a reminder, I would like to ask everyone to please silence your cell phone and portable devices. (Three raps of the gavel) Please join me in the Pledge of the Allegiance. Hand salute.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Two. (One rap of the gavel). Oh, please stay standing. I'm sorry. I would like to call on Chaplain Varner Dancer to lead us in prayer.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN DEBRA VARNER DANCER: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Oh, Heavenly Creator, once again we come to give thanks for you bountiful blessings upon our families, our friends and our fellow comrades.

We ask today as we go throughout this day give us the strength and the guidance that we need. Help us to represent not only you and reverence you but help us to represent with humility this great organization.

We pray for all the participants and all the work that they do as they participate and gather with us today, knowing that we're going through this day with success and great hope. We ask these things in your name. And the people said Amen.

(Response of "Amen;" whereupon, the chaplain withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: (One rap of the gavel) I'd like to remind each of you that in order for a delegate to be heard at this convention you must be recognized by the chair. Only those delegates at a microphone will be recognized. Upon being so recognized delegates must state their name, chapter number, and the department that they represent.

I would like to call on Credentials Committee Chair Brenda Reed for a report.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Credentials Committee chair advanced to the podium.)

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON BRENDA REED: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON REED: National Commander Espinosa National Adjutant Jesinoski, delegates, members and guests, this is the second interim report of the Committee on Credentials.

The roll call showed 1,009 delegates, and 48 alternates have registered, which includes 42 departments and 345 chapters registered. There are 9 national officers, 20 National Executive Committeemen, and 15 past national commanders currently registered for a total of 44 national officers. The total vote count is 7,548.

This partial report is for informational purposes only. And it reflects registration at the close of business at 6:00 p.m. on August 5th, 2024. Madam Commander, this completes the partial report of the Credentials Committee.

(Whereupon, the Credentials Committee chair withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: This is a reminder that registration will close this morning at 10:00 a.m. More than 500,000 veterans, service members and families call Arizona home. The state hosts seven military installations and claims more than three dozen Medal of Honor Recipients.

Joining us now is the state's governor. A Phoenix native, the Honorable Katie Hobbs was sworn into her office in 2023, and in short order has proven herself to be a friend to those who served. This May

she signed into law Arizona House Bill 2246 which empowers schools here to apply to become Purple Star Schools, which helps military-connected students smoothly transition to new schools.

A former social worker, she was elected to the Arizona House in 2010 and served four terms, including two as Senate Minority Leader, before being elected Secretary of State in 2018.

Here to welcome us to the Grand Canyon State, Governor Katie Hobbs. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the governor was delayed.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I'm sorry. She has been delayed and so we'll have to come back for this speech. (Laughter) Thank you.

And now, DAV Department of Arizona Commander Kevin Cooper and Adjutant Ron Cox have asked to come to the stage for a presentation on behalf of their fellow veterans of the Grand Canyon state.

(Applause)

(Whereupon, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Cox advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT RON COX: On behalf of the Department of Arizona and all of our members I'd like to present the commander with this token of our appreciation. It's a made by the Navaho tribe and there is a card in the box that tells you exactly what the colors mean and all that stuff. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander was presented with the gift.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Oh, wow, it's beautiful. Thank you.

ADJUTANT COX: I couldn't forget Barry so, Barry, something for you. It's made by the Navaho nation so take it back.

(Whereupon, the adjutant was presented with the gift.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Let's go get some photos.

(Whereupon, an official photograph was taken, after which Mr. Cooper and Mr. Cox withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Here to welcome us to the Grand Canyon State, Governor Katie Hobbs. (Applause)

THE HONORABLE KATIE HOBBS: Good morning, everyone.

(Response of "Good morning.")

GOVERNOR HOBBS: I am so thrilled to be here to start my day with all of you and I hope you're as happy to be here in Arizona as we are to have you here.

As the governor of the great State of Arizona, it is my honor to welcome all of you to this conference here in Arizona for the first time in your 102 year history. We are so happy to have you here.

I am the proud daughter, granddaughter and daughter-in-law of veterans and Arizona is the proud home of nearly 600,000 veterans and their families.

As we work to make sure that we're providing services that these folks need, that their needs are met, it is such a huge responsibility we have in this state. And partners like DAV and the DAV Auxiliary are so critical to this work.

I am really excited about some of the successes that we've had in serving veterans. I'm proud that we've secured \$900 million in benefits for Arizona's veterans.

We are working to reach all corners of this state through our Tribal Connectivity and Rural Outreach program. And we have a suicide prevention grant program that is working to combat social isolation, increase awareness, and target higher-risk areas with support for all of our veterans.

We're going to continue to make sure that veterans in every corner of our state are cared for. And even with the programs that we have in place we know there is a lot more to do.

We need to ensure that we're providing stable housing for veterans and their families. We're working to develop a path to a reduction in suicide rates and working to establish a reporting process specifically for identifying unsheltered veteran because we know they make up way too much of a part of our homeless population here.

Again, organizations like yours are so critical to providing these vital services for Arizonans and veterans across the country.

On behalf of the entire State of Arizona, thank you so much for all you do to care for our veterans. I hope you have a wonderful conference and enjoy our warm weather while you're here. (Laughter) Thank you so much. Have a great time. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Governor Hobbs withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. Next, I would like to call upon Chairman Joseph Hall for the report of the Committee on Employment. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Committee on Employment chair advanced to the podium.)

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN JOSEPH HALL: Getting older. I need my glasses. (Laughter) All right. Comrade Commander and delegates. The National Committee on Employment was called to order on August 3rd, 2024, by the Committee advisors Ryan Burgos and Jeremy Yost.

The first order of business was the election of a Convention Committee chairman and secretary. Joseph Hall was elected as chairman and Lisa Gregory was elected as secretary.

The Committee then proceeded – (Moved microphone) I'll put that down a little bit – the Committee then proceeded to review the resolutions submitted and I will now report to you the resolutions recommended for adoption by the national convention. For the purpose of saving time I will read only the number and the purpose of the resolutions.

98, remove requirement that Department of Veterans Affairs' compensation to service-connected veterans is counted as income for purposes of federal financial aid determinations;

99, support prompt payment of contracts to service-disabled, veteran-owned businesses;

100, support legislation enhancing government-wide goals for participation by small businesses owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans;

101, support legislation to improve and protect education and employment benefits for disabled veterans and their survivors;

103, support legislation to eliminate the ten-year period for a spouse of a veteran who has been adjudicated as permanently and totally disabled due to service-connected conditions to use their entitlement to DEA under Chapter 35;

178, support licensure and certification of active-duty service personnel;

180, support veterans' preference in public employment;

230, ensuring transparency and support in SBA small business loans for veteran entrepreneurs;

238, support the adoption of programs and legislation to reduce barriers to employment, education, and full use and access to other benefits earned through service in the United States military;

254, provide adequate funding and permanency of veterans' employment and/or training programs;

255, support extension of a period of employment services under the Veteran Readiness and Employment Program;

256, protect veteran employment discrimination when receiving health care for service-connected conditions;

257, support legislation to create a work projects program that guarantees federal employment to service-disabled veterans;

266, veteran disparity due to COVID;

276, support outreach of employment of women veterans;

368, eliminate the 12-year rule to request Department of Veteran Affairs Veteran Readiness and Employment benefits under Chapter 31 for all veterans, leaving the date to apply for that benefit open-ended;

369, provide educational benefits for dependents of service-connected veterans rated 70 percent or more disabled;

370, support adequate staffing levels of Department of Veteran Affairs Veteran Readiness and Employment Service;

371, oppose using disabled veterans' outreach programs specialists and local veterans' employment representatives to work with or process assistance programs unrelated to veterans;

372, improve, reform and monitor activities of the mandatory transition goals – excuse me – improve, reform and monitor activities of the mandatory transition goals, plans success program;

373, support legislation to strengthen and protect service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses;

382 is creating an economic opportunity administration within the Department of Veteran Affairs;

384, support legislation to strengthen the veterans' employment emphasis under federal contract statute;

385, support legislation to remove the restriction against the transferring of education benefits of the Post 9/11 GI Bill directly to any dependent of the veteran at any time;

386 – whoo, a little warm up here (Laughter) whoo – support legislation to extend, expand and reform work opportunity tax credits and other employer incentives to hire and retain veteran employees;

396, support legislation to provide reasonable transition period for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses to retain veteran-owned small businesses – to retain federal protected status following the death of the disabled veteran owner;

397, support fraud prevention controls over – thank you – 397, support fraud prevention controls over service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses program – whooo.

(Whereupon, as the audience members began to chatter, Adjutant Jesinoski and Commander Espinosa stepped to the podium to check on Mr. Hall who then collapsed.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: We need medics, please.

(Whereupon, medics were called to attend to Mr. Hall who was laid down by the adjutant and commander; after attention by medics, Mr. Hall was transported for evaluation.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Joseph Hall is doing fine. He did lose consciousness for just a moment but he's recovering. He's alert and responsive to questions. Please let's take a moment of quiet and prayer for him. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a moment of quiet reflection was observed.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you so much. Our brother-in-arms will be fine. We just have to let him recover. To complete the report of the Committee on Employment I will ask the secretary, Lisa Gregory, to please come forward. Thank you.

(Whereupon, Employment Committee Secretary Lisa Gregory came forward to and the commander withdrew from the podium.)

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE SECRETARY LISA GREGORY: Number 397, support fraud prevention controls over service-disabled, veteran-owned small business programs;

554, veteran status protections against employment discrimination;

593, support verification improvements for veteran-owned businesses within the Department of Veterans Affairs;

594, support legislation to create, improve, and reform federal programs for service-disabled veteran entrepreneurship;

595, support legislation to reimburse, replace, and extend education and vocational benefits for disabled veterans and their survivors for education and training impacted by any national emergency;

596, encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to institute an outreach program to businesses that hire veterans and want to maintain their veteran workforce.

Comrade Commander, this completes the report of the Committee on Employment. On behalf of the Committee I move for the adoption of these resolutions and that the Committee be discharged with the thanks of the National Convention. (Applause)

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 98

REMOVE REQUIREMENT THAT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMPENSATION TO SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS IS COUNTED AS INCOME FOR PURPOSES OF FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID DETERMINATIONS

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) monthly disability compensation is a tax-free benefit awarded to ill and injured veterans and is not considered income under the Internal Revenue Code; and

WHEREAS, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) requires dependents of service-connected disabled veterans in receipt of VA disability compensation to disclose their parents' compensation as income under penalty of perjury; and

WHEREAS, this requirement is contrary to the intent of the VA disability compensation award and contrary to tax law; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to counter this arbitrary and capricious victimization of ill and injured veterans and their dependents, which can render the dependent child of a service-disabled veteran ineligible for federal student aid; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this requirement is unjust to service-disabled veterans and their dependents.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 99

SUPPORT PROMPT PAYMENT OF CONTRACTS TO SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES

WHEREAS, the program of contracts for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses SDVOSBs on a preferential basis should be of a great assistance to SDVOSBs that hire disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, we are aware of problems involving the nonpayment of contracts; and

WHEREAS, when these SDVOSBs complain about reduced payments, they face the threat of rejection from future contracts and/or the threat of being put out of business; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks and strongly supports the immediate payment of all completed SDVOSB contracts that are unpaid for more than one year, the expeditious payment of all unpaid completed SDVOSB contracts and an investigation of the inappropriate tactics used against our comrades by an independent prosecutor.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 100
SUPPORT LEGISLATION ENHANCING GOVERNMENT-WIDE GOALS
FOR PARTICIPATION BY SMALL BUSINESSES OWNED AND
CONTROLLED BY SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, section 502, Public Law 106–50, the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999, codified “the Government-wide goal for participation by small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans shall be established at not less than 3% of the total value of all prime contract and subcontract awards for each fiscal year”; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization has the Center for Veterans Enterprise, which maintains the VA’s database of Veteran- Owned Small Businesses VOSBs and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses SDVOSBs, as well as serving as an advocate for VOSBs, SDVOSBs, historically underutilized business (HUB) zone businesses and women-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, the database va.gov/osdbu Vendor Information Pages (VIP) lists businesses that are 51% or more owned by veterans and is the only one within the federal government; and

WHEREAS, VIP was originally established to act as a single-source database of certified VOSBs and SDVOSBs to supply all federal agencies and prime contractors information to assist the federal government with achieving the not less than 3% goal of set-aside contracts for SDVOSBs and/or contracts being awarded to SDVOSB or VOSB concerns, as mandated in Public Law 106–50; and

WHEREAS, while section 8127 (f)(4), Public Law 109–461, requires verification of veterans’ ownership of listed SDVOSBs and VOSBs, as well as verification of the service-disabled status of SDVOSBs, the federal agencies tasked with ensuring set-asides and timely, comprehensive verification have failed to do so; and

WHEREAS, according to the VA Office of Inspector General report, Audit of Veteran-Owned and Service Disabled-Owned Small Business Programs, Report Number 10-02436-234, dated July 25, 2011, 32 of 42 statistically selected businesses that were reviewed—76%—were either ineligible to participate in the programs or were ineligible for the awarded contracts; and

WHEREAS, few government agencies have met, much less exceeded, the set-aside program goal for disabled veteran-owned businesses; and

WHEREAS, based on section 1347, Public Law 111–240, the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, SDVOSBs, HUB zone businesses, women-owned small businesses and small businesses now the same meaning, thus providing parity to each of these businesses when competing for contracts; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation and efforts to increase the federal set-asides for VOSB and SDVOSB to 5% of all governments agencies to provide parity to those goals for women- owned businesses; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on all government agencies to meet the set-aside goal of all prime and subcontract awards to businesses controlled by service-disabled veterans each fiscal year; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should enact legislation requiring the federal government make set-asides mandatory, rather than be goals, and should require underperforming federal agencies to make up shortfalls in achieving these goals in the subsequent fiscal year; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should revise the enforcement penalties for misrepresentation of a business concern as a VOSB or SDVOSB from a reasonable period of time as determined by the Secretary to a period of not less than five years; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress must ensure adequate resources are available to the Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization to expedite verification of VIP business listing eligibility and all federal agencies to effectively monitor and hold accountable those agencies that are not meeting the set-aside goals and require all federal agencies to list in their annual reports their prior

fiscal year's actual percentage of meeting this goal, the results of which would serve as an annual report card of which agencies need the most assistance in the development and implementation of stronger contracting compliance.

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RESOLUTION NO. 101
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE AND PROTECT EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR DISABLED VETERANS AND THEIR SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) and Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (Chapter 35) have been integral to improving the economic outlook for both service-disabled veterans and their survivors; and

WHEREAS, despite improvements in the overall veteran unemployment rate, service-disabled veterans still have a higher rate of unemployment than their civilian counterparts; and

WHEREAS, programs, such as VetSuccess on Campus, that could be used to reach more rural locations, could be expanded and strengthened; and

WHEREAS, both Chapter 35 and the VA's VR&E benefits should be strengthened and protected from budget cuts and fraud, waste and abuse; and

WHEREAS, survivors and dependents of severely disabled veterans should see their benefits under Chapter 35 strengthened and increased so as not to cause a financial burden if they choose to attend school; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that would improve and protect the VA's education and employment benefits for service-disabled veterans and their survivors.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 103
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ELIMINATE THE 10-YEAR PERIOD FOR A VETERAN
WHO HAS BEEN ADJUDICATED AS PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED
DUE TO SERVICE-CONNECTED CONDITIONS FOR SPOUSE TO BE ENTITLED
TO DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER CHAPTER 35

WHEREAS, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a tax-free monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors of military service members who died in the line of duty or eligible survivors of veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease; and

WHEREAS, evidence must show the service member died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, or the veteran died from a service-connected illness or injury, or the veteran did not die from a service-connected illness or injury, but was eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs compensation for a service-connected disability rated as totally disabling for a certain period of time; and

WHEREAS, the veteran's eligibility was due to a rating of totally disabling, they must have had this rating for at least 10 years before their death, or since their release from active duty and for at least five years immediately before their death, or for at least one year before their death if they were a former prisoner of war who died after September 30, 1999; and

WHEREAS, while modern battlefields have become increasingly dangerous, the medical field has matched the technological advances, allowing more veterans with injuries to survive than was the case in past war periods; and

WHEREAS, many of the current generation of veterans who are permanently and totally disabled are relatively young, their spouses likely end up working, caring for the children, and acting as caregiver for the veteran, thus not giving them sufficient time to obtain education in those early years; and

WHEREAS, the demands of the spouse to attend to their families needs often takes precedent over their own desire to seek to improve their education;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to eliminate the delimiting date for spouses eligible to Dependents Educational Assistance under Chapter 35.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 178
SUPPORT LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION OF
ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE PERSONNEL

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) establishes, measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation within the armed forces, providing some of the best vocational training in the nation to its military personnel; and

WHEREAS, that training is not recognized as fulfilling the certification and licensure requirements of applicable civilian equivalent occupations by all of the states; and

WHEREAS, many former military personnel certified as proficient in their military occupational specialty are not certified or licensed to perform a comparable job in the civilian workforce once they leave the military; and

WHEREAS, many occupational career fields in the armed forces could translate to civilian occupations if the DOD, in collaboration with states, unions and certifying/licensing entities, would expand its training curriculum to meet the various certification and licensure requirements of applicable civilian equivalent occupations or forge some other path to do so; and

WHEREAS, once the DOD expands its training approaches to meet the requirements of civilian equivalent career paths, service members could take certification or licensure equivalency examinations to gain journeyman status on par with the military occupation level of proficiency for the state in which they plan to reside; and

WHEREAS, the state in which the military service member plans to reside could then confer the appropriate journeyman equivalent status; and

WHEREAS, as military service members continue to serve, additional training or education could be counted as continuing training or education credits, thereby allowing them to retain certification and/or licensure status; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 112–56, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, mandates the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Assistant Secretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training Service to carry out a demonstration project on credentialing to facilitate the seamless transition of members of the armed forces to civilian employment by selecting up to five military occupational specialties with a skill or set of skills that are required for civilian employment in industries with high career demand; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the elimination of employment barriers that impede the transfer of military occupations to the civilian labor market; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to engage in a national dialogue, working closely with the Administration generally, and the DOD, Department of Veterans Affairs and DOL specifically, as well as state governments, employers, trade unions, and licensure and credentialing entities, to establish a clear process so that military training meets civilian certification and licensure requirements for the states in which veterans choose to live once they leave military service.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 180
SUPPORT VETERANS’ PREFERENCE IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

WHEREAS, DAV strongly supports federal, state and local veterans’ preference laws; and

WHEREAS, under section 2108, title 5, United States Code, qualified veterans with military service in periods of conflict receive a five-point preference in federal hiring, and service-disabled veterans receive a 10-point preference; and

WHEREAS, numerous special hiring authorities exist in federal law for veterans and service-disabled veterans, including the veterans recruitment appointment authority, Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 hiring authority and the 30% or more disabled veterans hiring authority; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as amended, requires most federal contractors to have an “Affirmative Action” plan for employment of service-disabled veterans, veterans who served during periods of conflict and recently separated veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act was enacted to protect veterans from job discrimination and ensure their right to reemployment after an absence due to service in the uniformed services, to include protection for seniority, health insurance and retirement benefits; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies generally have not taken a proactive position on identifying patterns and practices of veterans' preference employment discrimination violations; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports veterans' preference in federal, state and local employment; greater enforcement provisions; and increased accountability for veterans hiring compliance; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports appropriate enforcement against systemic veterans' preference discrimination, broader utilization of veterans and service-disabled veterans hiring preference, and substantive improvement of recruitment and hiring of veterans generally and service-disabled veterans specifically.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 230

ENSURE TRANSPARENCY AND SUPPORT IN SMALL BUSINESS

ADMINISTRATION SMALL BUSINESS LOANS FOR VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS

WHEREAS, the DAV, dedicated to advocating for Disabled American Veterans, identifies a significant concern with the Small Business Administration's (SBA) handling of small business loans for veteran entrepreneurs; and

WHEREAS, interactions with members and constituents reveal a lack of transparency and clarity in small business loan requirements, particularly concerning personal credit scores and revenue streams, leading to hurdles and frustrations for many veteran entrepreneurs; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to clarify and construct resolution that benefits the veteran community and promotes entrepreneurship; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DAV demands immediate action from the SBA to mandate transparency and clarity in its communications with veteran entrepreneurs regarding small business loans; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DAV urges the SBA to:

- Clearly outline specific requirements for veteran entrepreneurs seeking small business loans, provide a scale from lowest credit score to qualify, and allowed to the highest credit score and the maximum amount allowed, making this information readily accessible on the SBA website and in all relevant communication channels;
- Provide realistic average loan amounts alongside maximum loan amounts to offer veteran entrepreneurs a clearer understanding of the financial support they can expect from SBA backed loans;
- Ensure SBA representatives are adequately trained and equipped with a standardized checklist to assist veteran entrepreneurs so all SBA representatives are giving some information navigating the loan application process, including providing guidance on a flow chart meeting the necessary requirements, helping address any concerns or questions veterans may have;
- Include specific guidance on obtaining a Veteran Owned Business (VOB) certification and its effectiveness in assisting veteran entrepreneurs in securing business funding with follow-up explanation to the veterans for continued progress; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DAV emphasizes the imperative role of the SBA in supporting and empowering veteran entrepreneurs by providing them with the necessary information and resources to pursue their small business endeavors successfully; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DAV anticipates a prompt response from the SBA regarding the actions it intends to take to address the demands outlined in this resolution.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 238

SUPPORT THE ADOPTION OF PROGRAMS AND LEGISLATION TO REDUCE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND FULL USE AND ACCESS TO OTHER BENEFITS EARNED THROUGH SERVICE IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY

WHEREAS, DAV is dedicated to empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity; and

WHEREAS, a primary focus for DAV is to provide free, professional assistance to service-disabled veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service; and

WHEREAS, furthering their education and seeking gainful employment to support themselves and their families becomes a veteran's immediate and continued focus upon leaving service; and

WHEREAS, upon separation from service, veterans do not always fully understand the scope and breadth of their earned benefits, how to access those benefits, and often do not understand or realize the barriers that impede or infringe on those benefits; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the adoption of programs and legislation to identify, reduce and remove barriers to a service-disabled veteran's employment, continued education, and full access and use of other benefits earned as a result of their service-connected disability.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 254
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXTEND THE DURATION OF VETERAN
READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS BEYOND 48 MONTHS

WHEREAS, veterans that have a disability rating with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and are considered to have an employment handicap are eligible for Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) services through the VA; and

WHEREAS, disabled veterans are eligible for VR&E for a duration not to exceed 48 months (or its equivalent when pursued on a part-time basis); and

WHEREAS, many veterans do not have any college prior to entering the VR&E program and require basic, entry-level courses to start college; and

WHEREAS, VR&E released its Longitudinal Study Annual Report for fiscal year 2016, in which it states that the average college degree takes up to five years to complete; and

WHEREAS, it would be more equitable if the laws and regulations were changed so that veterans were eligible for VR&E benefits beyond 48 months, extending them to a minimum of 60 months, to ensure that they can complete their program without additional financial burden; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that would allow VR&E benefits to be extended, to a minimum of 60 months, for eligible veterans, to ensure that they can complete their program without additional financial burden.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 255
SUPPORT EXTENSION OF A PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER
THE VETERAN READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, section 3105, title 38, United States Code (USC), states the period of a Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program for a veteran may not exceed 48 months; and

WHEREAS, 38 USC §3105 allows veterans counseling and placement and post-placement services for an additional period not to exceed 18 months in any case in which the Secretary determines the provision of such counseling and services to be necessary to accomplish the purposes of a rehabilitation program in the individual case; and

WHEREAS, veterans with service-connected disabilities face employment barriers even after rehabilitation or achievement of vocational goals; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks to ensure that service-connected veterans receive the services necessary to obtain and maintain suitable employment and supports an extension up to 24 months for counseling and placement and post-placement services.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 256
PROTECT VETERANS FROM EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION WHEN
RECEIVING HEALTH CARE FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED CONDITIONS

WHEREAS, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requires certain employers to allow employees to take reasonable unpaid leave for qualified medical and family reasons; and

WHEREAS, the National Defense Authorization Acts for fiscal years 2008 and 2010 amended the FMLA to include "qualifying exigency leave" and "military caregiver leave" to better balance the unique needs of employees with family members in the military and family members ill and injured while serving in the military; and

WHEREAS, the FMLA delays service-connected disabled veterans' eligibility to job-protected medical leave; and

WHEREAS, many service-disabled veterans with the ability to work need ongoing care to maintain their health status and retain their employability; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to extend protection under the FMLA to encompass the medical care needs of veterans with service-connected disabilities.

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RESOLUTION NO. 257

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO CREATE A WORK PROJECTS PROGRAM THAT GUARANTEES FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT TO SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, the federal government set a precedent with the creation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), later renamed the Work Projects Administration (WPA), to complete major public works projects before World War II; and

WHEREAS, WPA was highly successful in completing major public works projects; and WHEREAS, general government infrastructure nationwide lacks sufficient funding to maintain the adequate safety of public roads, bridges, water supplies and the like; and

WHEREAS, the nation's veterans have proved themselves as dedicated, highly trained and capable workers that bring leadership and maturity to the workforce; and

WHEREAS, such a program has the potential to significantly reduce veteran homelessness caused by high unemployment rates and demonstrate the gratitude of the people served by our veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, strongly supports legislation to require the United States Congress to create and fund, without reduction to Department of Veterans Affairs of Department of Defense funding, a jobs program similar to WPA, which guarantees federal employment to service-disabled veterans being discharged from military service under other than dishonorable conditions.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 266

ENSURE VETERANS RECEIVE EXTENSIONS OF EDUCATION BENEFITS DUE TO COVID

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the educational experiences of veteran college students around the country; and

WHEREAS, during a global pandemic and economic recession, these structural barriers and challenges are magnified; and

WHEREAS, even in the absence of a global pandemic, the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which provides generous postsecondary educational benefits for US military veterans and their dependents, is administratively complex; and

WHEREAS, many colleges and universities cite the complexity of veterans' educational benefits as a major challenge to supporting veterans once they are enrolled; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the entity responsible for administering those benefits, has a recent history of failing to provide veterans with timely payments of the benefits they deserve; and

WHEREAS, if discharged before January 1, 2013, Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits expire 15 years after separation from the military and Montgomery GI Bill benefits expire 10 years after separation from the military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Emergency Health orders closed schools and universities for a period of two years, which halted educational benefits for those veterans leaving service before January 1, 2013; and

WHEREAS HHS declared under Section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, ended the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the educational disruptions due to COVID-19 increased the complexity and uncertainty of GI Bill funding, which hindered student veterans' educational outcomes; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, DAV supports that Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) for those veterans leaving service before January 1, 2013 be converted to the Forever GI Bill with an 18-month extension of benefits.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 276

SUPPORT OUTREACH AND EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, many women who have served in the military are not aware of services available to them through State Employment Security Agencies/State Workforce Agencies and therefore are less likely to obtain employment and training assistance than their male counterparts; and

WHEREAS, over the past decade, a significant increase has occurred in the number of women veterans in need of employment and training services; and

WHEREAS, because of the reduction in federal programs and the reduction of jobs for women in the private sector, the number of unemployed women veterans continues to increase; and

WHEREAS, workforce trends indicate only job-ready and highly skilled women veterans are able to find career employment; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to enact legislation to establish and fund special programs and outreach to women veterans, especially service-disabled women veterans, in need of employment assistance from the nation's basic labor exchange system and training assistance through programs operated under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls for additional training to be provided to service providers to address the delivery of services to, and the underrepresentation of, women veterans in career employment.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 368

ELIMINATE THE 12-YEAR RULE TO REQUEST DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VETERAN READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS UNDER CHAPTER 31, FOR ALL VETERANS, LEAVING THE DATE TO APPLY FOR THAT BENEFIT OPEN-ENDED

WHEREAS, not all disabled veterans are aware of their possible entitlements to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) programs at the time they are awarded service connection for disabilities; and

WHEREAS, not all awards of service connection are rated high enough to enable veterans to be awarded chapter 31 benefits; and

WHEREAS, not all disabled veterans are under the impression that they need vocational rehabilitation until later, often after the current 12-year rule excludes them from the benefit they need and would otherwise have been entitled to; and

WHEREAS, the VA puts no time limit on when a veteran may claim their disability, and the VA also does not put a time limit on requesting another service-connected benefit; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 116–315 removed this period of eligibility but only for veterans who were discharged after January 1, 2013; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks legislation to eliminate the 12-year limitation to apply for VR&E benefits for all veterans, leaving a veteran's date of entitlement open-ended without time limit.

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RESOLUTION NO. 369

PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS FOR DEPENDENTS OF SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS RATED 70% OR MORE DISABLED

WHEREAS, chapter 35, title 38, United States Code, extends educational assistance to the dependents of service-connected veterans who are evaluated as permanently and totally disabled; and

WHEREAS, many service-connected veterans rated 70%, 80% and 90% disabled have reduced earning ability and cannot afford to assist dependents with the cost of attending higher learning or pursuing vocational training; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks the enactment of legislation which would extend educational assistance under chapter 35, title 38, United States Code, to the dependents of veterans who have service-connected disability ratings of 70% or more.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 370
SUPPORT ADEQUATE STAFFING LEVELS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS VETERAN READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) service is charged with preparing service-disabled veterans for suitable employment or providing independent-living services to those veterans with disabilities severe enough to render them unemployable; and

WHEREAS, transition of service-disabled veterans to meaningful employment relies heavily on the VA's ability to provide vocational rehabilitation and employment services in a timely and effective manner, but the demands and expectations being placed on the VR&E service are exceeding the organization's current capacity to effectively deliver a full continuum of comprehensive programs; and

WHEREAS, the VR&E service has been experiencing a shortage of staff nationwide because of insufficient funding, which, as a result, has caused delays in providing VR&E services to service-disabled veterans, thus reducing their opportunities to achieve successful and timely rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, to increase emphasis on employment, the VR&E service has begun an initiative entitled "Coming Home to Work," an early outreach effort to provide VR&E services to eligible service members pending medical separation from active duty at military treatment facilities, which will require additional staff to maintain efforts nationwide; and

WHEREAS, even though the focus of the VR&E service has drastically changed to career development and employment, it is not clear, despite VR&E's additional 80 employment coordinators, whether the VA is able to meet the current and future demand for employment services; and

WHEREAS, in addition, the current 60 days of employment as the standard for a veteran to be considered fully employed is insufficient given that employers typically require longer probationary employment time frames; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports strengthening of the VA's VR&E service to meet the demands of service-disabled veterans by providing increased staffing and funding, a more timely and effective transition into the workforce, and placement follow-up with employers for at least six months.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 371
OPPOSE USING DISABLED VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
AND LOCAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVES TO WORK WITH
OR PROCESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS UNRELATED TO VETERANS

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service administers programs to assist veterans with their employment and training needs; and

WHEREAS, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services to disabled veterans and veterans with barriers to employment in finding work, and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) work with nondisabled veterans, informing them of employment opportunities, and outreach to community businesses to locate employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Public Law 112–56, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, state employment agencies are now directed to utilize DVOP specialists and LVERs to work on other public assistance-related programs, which diverts DVOP specialists/LVERs from their prime mission to assist veterans with their employment and training needs; and

WHEREAS, this same law directs the Secretary of Labor to conduct regular audits to ensure compliance with this provision; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to amend Public Law 112–56 and return the duties of DVOP specialists and LVERs to concentrate their work to aid veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 372
IMPROVE, REFORM AND MONITOR ACTIVITIES OF THE MANDATORY
TRANSITION GOALS, PLANS, SUCCESS PROGRAM

WHEREAS, current law authorizes comprehensive transition assistance benefits and services for separating service members and their spouses and requires that the Transition Assistance Program

(TAP) and Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP), now known as the Transition Goals, Plans, Success (GPS) program; and

WHEREAS, the transition from military service to civilian life is very difficult for many veterans who must overcome obstacles to successful employment; and

WHEREAS, the transition program was created to help our separating service members successfully transition to the civilian workforce, start a business or pursue training or higher education and is now mandatory for active-duty personnel, except under certain circumstances as specified in Public Law 112–56, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act; and

WHEREAS, participation by DAV and other veterans service organizations in the Transition GPS program is essential to service members to gain a full understanding of entitlements and free assistance and representation available upon discharge from military service; and

WHEREAS, the Transition GPS program expands the previous TAP and DTAP workshops from five to seven days (or longer in some instances) to strengthen, standardize and expand counseling and guidance for service members as they are separating from military service while transforming the military's approach to education, training and credentialing for service members; and

WHEREAS, the Transition GPS program, and its component TAP and DTAP workshops, are essential to easing some of the problems associated with transition, as is periodic review of training methodology and the collection and analysis of course participant critiques to ensure the program is fulfilling its intended objective, as mandated in Public Law 112–56; and

WHEREAS, as the Transition GPS Program was established several years ago, it does not fully contemplate new needs of transitioning service members nor additional programs to improve their transition; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to create new services and to improve and reform the Transition GPS Program; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to provide comprehensive oversight of the Transition GPS program; its workshops, training methodology and delivery of services; and the collection and analysis of course critiques; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports the inclusion of veterans service organizations in workshops, in order to confirm the program is meeting its objective and to follow up with participants to determine if they found gainful employment following such training.

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RESOLUTION NO. 373

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN AND PROTECT SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

WHEREAS, the federal government's support of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) contributes significantly to restoring veterans' quality of life while aiding in their transitions from active duty; and

WHEREAS, the federal government sets aside over \$105 billion in annual small business spending, which the SDVOSBs compete for; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans First Program was created under Public Law 109–461 for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) and expanded the Service-Disabled Veteran contracting program for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procurements in order for veteran business owners and the government to benefit mutually; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans First Program's purpose is to ensure that legitimately owned and controlled VOSBs and SDVOSBs are able to compete for VA VOSB and SDVOSB set-asides and help stimulate the small business community and create growth for the economy; and

WHEREAS, the success of the SDVOSB programs greatly benefits the service-disabled veteran community; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation that strengthens and protects SDVOSB programs.

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**RESOLUTION NO. 382
CREATE AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ADMINISTRATION
WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

WHEREAS, veterans programs have become more complex over the years; the fragmented nature of these programs has resulted in a decreased ability of senior management to monitor the delivery of each veteran's employment, education and training program; and

WHEREAS, when the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was created, the initial reason for doing so was to avoid duplication, fragmentation or delay in the various services provided to veterans; and

WHEREAS, anticipating veterans' long-term needs, not only for health care and disability compensation but also for education and employment, requires a new approach; and

WHEREAS, establishing a fourth administration within the VA dedicated to creating economic opportunities for veterans would increase the visibility and accountability of all veterans education and employment-related programs; and

WHEREAS, despite a steadily increasing workload due to more veterans becoming eligible as the compensation backlog is reduced, programs such as Veteran Readiness and Employment have seen a stagnation of budget requests and even reductions; and

WHEREAS, this new centralized veterans economic opportunity administration should be administered through a new position of Under Secretary for said organization; and

WHEREAS, such a move would allow the Under Secretary for Benefits to focus specifically on the delivery of disability compensation and pension benefits to disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, recommends that Congress separate from the Veterans Benefits Administration all programs related to economic opportunity and create a new administration and that it should be appropriately funded and administered by an Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity.

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**RESOLUTION NO. 384
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN THE VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT
EMPHASIS UNDER FEDERAL CONTRACTS STATUTE**

WHEREAS, section 4212, title 38, United States Code (USC), requires federal contractors to give preference in hiring to disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, veterans themselves are required to enforce the law, presuming those that are covered by the law are aware of it and are able to detect violations; and

WHEREAS, the requirement does not take effect unless a legally mandated provision is included in federal contracts; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies regularly omit the mandatory provision from applicable contracts; and WHEREAS, millions of veterans entitled to valuable employment assistance are being denied without recourse; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that will amend 38 USC §4212 to clearly require automatic, active recruiting and hiring of veterans by federal contractors.

* * *

**RESOLUTION NO. 385
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REMOVE THE RESTRICTION AGAINST THE
TRANSFERRING OF EDUCATION BENEFITS OF THE POST 9/11 GI BILL
DIRECTLY TO ANY DEPENDENT OF THE VETERAN AT ANY TIME**

WHEREAS, current law provides restrictive rules and regulations limiting the transfer of education benefits to a dependent of the veteran; and

WHEREAS, veterans with entitlement to the Post-9/11 GI Bill who did not transfer entitlement to dependents through registering in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System once separated from service can no longer transfer entitlement to new dependent; and

WHEREAS, therefore these veterans who wish to transfer entitlement to a new spouse, adopted child or any dependent not listed cannot do so; and

WHEREAS, this restriction of utilizing the earned education benefit to the veterans wished purpose for the veteran's family is restricted; and

WHEREAS, allowing the veteran to transfer entitlement of post-9/11 education benefits to any dependent of the veteran at any time would be of the veteran's wishes and good purpose of the veteran's earned entitlement; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to repeal the restrictions of entitlement to transfer post-9/11 education benefits to any dependent of the veteran at any time.

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RESOLUTION NO. 386
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXTEND, EXPAND AND REFORM WORK
OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDITS AND OTHER EMPLOYER INCENTIVES
TO HIRE AND RETAIN VETERAN EMPLOYEES

WHEREAS, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring and employing individuals from certain targeted groups, including disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, in general, WOTC is equal to 40% of up to \$6,000 of wages paid to, or incurred on behalf of, an individual who is in their first year of employment; is certified as being a member of a targeted group; and performs at least 400 hours of services for that employer; and

WHEREAS, WOTC is only applicable for hiring a certified veteran prior to December 31, 2025, and does not apply beyond that first year; and

WHEREAS, WOTC was extended in September 2021 and will expire December 31, 2025; and WHEREAS, a RAND Corporation study on qualified veterans found that WOTC increased their employment rates by 2% and increased their wage income by nearly 40%; and

WHEREAS, another study, The Effects of an Employer Subsidy on Employment Outcomes: A Study of the Work Opportunity and Welfare-to-Work Tax Credits, found no evidence for WOTC having a positive impact on either employment rates or wages in the long term; and

WHEREAS, veterans with service-related injuries deserve the opportunity for long-term employment and retention in a variety of career fields; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to extend WOTC beyond December 31, 2025; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to expand and reform WOTC tax credits for employers who employ certified veterans beyond the first year; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to enact other tax credit incentive programs for employers to hire and retain disabled veterans in a variety of locations.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 396
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE A REASONABLE TRANSITION
PERIOD FOR SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES
TO RETAIN FEDERAL PROTECTED STATUS FOLLOWING THE
DEATH OF THE DISABLED VETERAN OWNER

WHEREAS, section 308, Public Law 108–183, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003, established a procurement program for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB); and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 13360, Contracting with Service-Disabled Veterans' Businesses, directs all federal agencies to provide opportunities for SDVOSBs to increase their federal contracting and subcontracting opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 109–461, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, established a Veterans First Contracting Program specifically for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to increase business opportunities with the VA for SDVOSBs; and

WHEREAS, SDVOSBs and other small businesses are the focus of Public Law 111–240, the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, which provides enhanced opportunities for SDVOSBs to compete for federal projects and subcontracting opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the SDVOSB category has encouraged many service-disabled veterans to take the personal risk of establishing small businesses with the support of their families; their own personal financial resources, the VA; and, in some cases, commercial institutions; and

WHEREAS, these SDVOSBs have created new job opportunities for American citizens and, in many cases, have hired other service-disabled veterans and veterans during very challenging economic times; and

WHEREAS, in enacting Public Law 111–240, the federal government acknowledges that it is essential to create and grow small businesses in order to create new jobs and help the country recover from a most severe recession and provide for future job growth; and

WHEREAS, the SDVOSB category requires the service-disabled veteran to own at least 51% of the stock in the business and remain active in the day-to-day operations of the business in order for the business to maintain its SDVOSB status; and

WHEREAS, the enabling legislation for the SDVOSB program does not currently include a provision dealing with the treatment of the business after the death of the veteran owner; and

WHEREAS, since loss of the company's SDVOSB status would put the service-disabled veteran's investment, family heirs and employees at severe risk due to either downsizing or closing the business due to loss of federal procurement opportunities; and

WHEREAS, section 8127 (h)(2)(C), Public Law 109–461 (applicable only to the VA), allows for a 10-year transition period to the surviving spouse of a 100% service-disabled veteran owner of a SDVOSB or a veteran owner who dies as a result of a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, allowing the surviving spouses or heirs of service-disabled veterans to gain a reasonable transition period for the SDVOSB program would help to maintain the jobs created by the SDVOSB for service-disabled veterans, veterans and other employees and will not put these individuals at increased financial risk and hardship due to likely job loss or downsizing of the business; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to provide a reasonable transition period for all SDVOSBs, not covered by Public Law 109–461, to retain their SDVOSB status with the federal government following the death of the service-disabled veteran owner via a surviving spouse, children or heirs, thus allowing the business to restructure over time without necessarily downsizing, laying off workers or closing.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 397 SUPPORT FRAUD PREVENTION CONTROLS OVER SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) Program, designed to steer \$4 billion in government contracts to businesses owned by service-disabled veterans, has allowed over \$90 million to be fraudulently awarded to ineligible companies; and

WHEREAS, the Small Business Administration failed to properly check applicants before awarding contracts and failed to take action on service-disabled veterans' complaints of abuse; and

WHEREAS, testimony presented by the United States Government Accountability Office identified millions of dollars of SDVOSB contracts awarded to ineligible firms; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks and strongly supports creating effective resources to investigate, prevent and monitor the SDVOSB program and to ensure that fraud is aggressively prosecuted or companies having committed fraud are suspended, debarred or otherwise held accountable.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 554 SUPPORT VETERAN STATUS PROTECTIONS AGAINST EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

WHEREAS, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), as amended (42 U.S.C. § 2000e), protects individuals against unlawful employment practices, or otherwise prohibits discrimination because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; and

WHEREAS, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended (42 U.S.C. § 12101), protects individuals against unlawful employment practices, or otherwise prohibits discrimination because of such individual's: a) physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; b) record of such an impairment; or c) being regarded as having such an impairment; and

WHEREAS, presently, veteran status is not considered a protected category against unlawful employment practices or employment discrimination under existing federal statutes; and

WHEREAS, the ADA only provides protections against employment discrimination for veterans with a qualifying disability as defined under the ADA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, petitions the United States Congress to amend Title VII to include veteran status as a federally protected category against unlawful employment practices and discrimination.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 593
SUPPORT VERIFICATION IMPROVEMENTS FOR VETERAN-OWNED
BUSINESSES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the military is downsizing, and thousands of former military personnel who have honorably served their country could become unemployed when they leave the military; and

WHEREAS, small business development assistance to veterans who have honorably served this country is a veterans benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized under the Veterans First program to enter into contracts first with Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) and then with Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB); and

WHEREAS, Congress has found that the VA has entered into contracts pursuant to the Veterans First program with companies that were not legitimate SDVOSBs or VOSBs; and

WHEREAS, the VA has implemented a formal verification process that is overly burdensome; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, recommends the VA simplify its verification process for SDVOSBs and VOSBs interested in participating in the VA's Veterans First Contracting Program.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 594
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO CREATE, IMPROVE AND REFORM FEDERAL
PROGRAMS FOR SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEREAS, the federal government has established programs to assist Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) and veteran self-employment, but many of these programs have not been reformed or updated in multiple years; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veteran Affairs' (VA's) program Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E) in 2021 provided education and employment services to over 80,000 eligible disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VR&E has a self-employment track; however, its eligibility is open to only "veterans with the most severe service-connected disabilities who require homebound training or self-employment," resulting in just 162 veterans participating in the self-employment track in 2021; and

WHEREAS, veterans with service-related injuries deserve the opportunity for self-employment that accommodates their employment barriers and provides them with financial empowerment; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to create federal programs for service-disabled veteran entrepreneurship; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to improve and reform existing federal service-disabled veteran entrepreneurship programs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to expand eligibility for the self-employment training within the VA's VR&E program.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 595
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REIMBURSE, REPLACE
AND EXTEND EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL BENEFITS FOR DISABLED
VETERANS AND THEIR SURVIVORS FOR EDUCATION/TRAINING
IMPACTED BY ANY NATIONAL EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, all educational and vocational programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have an established number of months of potential eligibility; and

WHEREAS, the underlying premise for the educational and vocational programs is to enable the veteran and/or their dependents to obtain college/university/trade school-based education; and

WHEREAS, during the certain situations, all schools/colleges/universities may experience impacts to the ability to serve the student population, to include both class and counseling; and

WHEREAS, this disruption impacted the quality of education obtained during that period and the schools/students continue to face difficulties in adjusting to changes imposed by lockdowns and the ongoing pandemic; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, proposes, seeks and strongly supports Congress directing the VA to not count the semesters/quarters of school that were interrupted, beginning in March 2020 due to any national emergency restrictions, against the overall number of months of eligibility for any veteran/dependent who was in receipt of benefits from any VA education or vocational program at the time, and continuing until such a time as Congress determines that stability to the educational process has returned; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to ensure that any delimiting date, whether through time frame of eligibility or, in the case of dependent children, the attainment of age, be extended for one full semester/quarter for each semester/quarter impacted by national emergency disruptions to fully mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 closures that began in March 2020.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 596
ENCOURAGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INSTITUTE AN
OUTREACH PROGRAM TO BUSINESSES THAT HIRE VETERANS AND WANT
TO MAINTAIN THEIR VETERAN WORKFORCE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has many programs designed to help veterans obtain training and gain employment; and

WHEREAS, there is no VA program designed to help businesses retain veterans who are employed; and

WHEREAS, veterans that are employed suffer from many disabilities, both physical and mentally; and

WHEREAS, employers are often left to deal when a veteran is triggered and shuts down, or becomes severely depressed, or even suicidal, leaving many businesses to release the veteran from their employment; and

WHEREAS, arming businesses with the VA resources to help their veteran employees will help businesses become successful and helps the veteran maintain employment; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports efforts by the VA to institute an outreach program to businesses that hire veterans and want to maintain their veteran workforce.

* * *

(Whereupon, the Employment Committee secretary withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. You have heard the motion. May I have a second?

MR. LEROY ACOSTA: Mic 1.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 1.

MR. ACOSTA: Leroy Acosta, DAV San Diego Chapter 2, moves, makes the motion – seconds.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. In accordance with Rule 9, now is the time for any rejected resolutions to be read. Are there any resolutions, rejected resolutions you wish read? Hearing none, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered.

(Whereupon, the Employment Committee secretary withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Senator Mark Kelley is a retired astronaut and Navy captain. A combat veteran, who flew combat missions during the Gulf War, was elected in 2020.

Though he wasn't able to attend in person, he provided the following message to the convention:

THE HONORABLE MARK KELLY: Hey, buddy, it's Senator Mark Kelly. Thank you for allowing me to take a moment to speak at this year's Disabled American Veterans National Convention here in Phoenix.

"As a 25-year Navy veteran I've seen how many of our service members come home with scars, the kind you can and the kind you can't see, which is why one of the most sacred promises our country makes is to care for our service members when they return home.

"They put their lives on the line for us. And we have an obligation to show up for them with the support they need to live healthy and dignified lives. Veterans and their families deserve a government that protects the benefits they have earned.

"As Arizona senator I will continue to work with Republicans and Democrats to improve the care available for our veterans and to make these critical benefits more accessible.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you today and I look forward to continuing to support the work you do. Thank you."

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I would like to call upon Chairman Trent Dilks for the report of the Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights chair advanced to the podium.)

LEGISLATION AND VETERANS RIGHTS CHAIRPERSON TRENT DILKS: Comrade Commander and delegates, the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights was called to order on August 4th, 2024, by the Committee advisors Joy Ilem and Scott Hope.

The first order of business was the election of a Convention Committee chairman and secretary. Trent Dilks was elected as chairman. And Brian Wilner was elected as secretary.

The Committee then proceeded to review the resolutions submitted. And I will now report to you the resolutions recommended for adoption by this national convention. For the purpose of saving time I will read only the number and the purpose of the resolutions. There we go. I can read them like that.

Resolution 1, support legislation to remove the prohibition against concurrent receipt of military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation for all longevity retired veterans;

2, support legislation to provide for presumptive service connection for tinnitus and hearing loss;

3, support legislation to establish presumptive service connection for diseases and illnesses related to toxic exposure at Grand Forks Air Force Base and Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota;

9, support legislation to replace current intent to file federal laws in VA policies;

12, support legislation to modify VA Form 21-526EZ and VA Form 20-0995 to include VA community care facilities for claiming disabilities;

22, compensate Persian Gulf War veterans suffering from illnesses circumstantially linked to their service in the Persian Gulf;

23, support sufficient, timely and predictable funding for all Department of Veterans' Affairs programs, benefits and services;

24, support legislation to include children in legal custody as a dependent for Department of Veterans' Affairs purposes;

25, support legislation to improve and reform the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Benefits;

26, support legislation recognizing racial trauma as a stressor for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder;

27, oppose regional dispersion of the Board of Veterans Appeals;

28, support legislation to require the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to decide each of an appellant's assignments of error;

29, support the elimination of the 30-day requirement for diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune;

30, support using the proposed Reduction Due Process for all disability evaluation reductions;

31, oppose all attempts to change the basis of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities from the average impairments of earnings capacity standard;

37, oppose any recommendation by any commission or other source to reduce or eliminate benefits for disabled veterans;

38, oppose reduction, taxation or elimination of veterans' benefits;

50, support legislation to reform and improve service-disabled veterans' life insurance;

51, support Department of Veterans' Affairs modernization of information technology and improvements to include digital sharing, adequate funding and improved access for disabled veterans;

52, support reauthorization of the Persian Gulf War Veterans' Act;

53, support reauthorization of the Agent Orange Act;

54, support resources and oversight of the appeals process;

60, support legislation to allow a veteran permanently and totally disabled due to service-connected conditions to continue to receive dependents compensation for their child, their adult child attending school while that child is in receipt of dependent's educational assistance; phew

61, support legislation for scientific evaluation to include conditions of the thyroid as a presumptive Gulf War disorder;

62, support legislation to reform fugitive felon status within the Department of Veterans Affairs;

63, support legislation to increase maximum evaluation for service-connected headaches;

64, establish immediate authorization of grants by the Board of Veterans' Appeals in all cases advanced on the docket;

66, support legislation for studies in presumptive diseases related to P-FAS exposure;

67, support legislation to provide studies in health care and benefits resulting from toxic exposures at K-2 Air Force base, Uzbekistan;

68, support legislation to expand Department of Veterans' Affairs mental health transition services to all service members upon discharge;

69, support legislation to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to verify dependency status within the Department of Defense and within the Department of Veterans' Affairs; phew. It's warm up here.

70, support legislation to oppose the payment of attorney's fees based on periods when the attorney was not involved in the claim;

71, support legislation to expand and recognize war-time service periods to include those veterans who served in combat environments from hostile military or terrorist activities from November 4th, 1979, through August 1, 1990;

72, support legislation to clarify and expand entitlement to Dependent's Educational Assistance under Chapter 35 for children of a two-veteran household;

73, support legislation to ensure entitlement to Spina Bifida and birth defects related to Agent Orange in (new locations) of the PACT Act;

74, support legislation requiring any appeal withdrawal to be in writing;

78, support legislation for presumptive service connection for additional diseases related to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune;

79, support legislation to allow expanded entitlement to Dependents' Educational Assistance under Chapter 35 for children of a two-veteran household;

81, support legislation for the payment of maximum burial allowance for veterans with a total disability rating based on individual unemployability;

82, to allow for accrued benefits to be paid to any surviving family member;

83, support improvement and modernization of the VA home loan guarantee;

87, resolution to support legislation authoring the VA to award a 10 percent disability rating for veterans that are prescribed medication to control hypertension;

108, increase the grants and specially adaptive equipment reimbursement rates for automobiles and other conveyances to certain disabled veterans and authorize reimbursement for new adaptive equipment technologies;

109, support legislation to improve the Department of Veterans' Affairs fiduciary program;

113, support legislation to provide studies, health care, and benefits resulting from toxic exposures in Bosnia and Kosovo;

114, support legislation that would exempt the benefits paid to wartime service-connected disabled veterans from pay-go/cut-go provisions of the Budget Enforcement Act; phew (Laughter)

115, amend provisions regarding eligibility for automobile adaptive equipment to include any veterans whose service-connected disability inhibits the ability to safely operate a motor vehicle;

116, oppose any proposal that would reduce payments in VA disability compensation by any federal benefit paid to a veteran;

117, support legislation to allow all veterans to recover taxes on disability severance pay;

118, support oversight of the Department of Veterans' Affairs practices in evaluating disability claims for residuals of military sexual trauma;

120, oppose lump-sum payments for service-connected disabilities;

121, oppose the imposition of time limits for filing compensation claims;

122, oppose any change that would redefine service-connected disability or restrict the conditions or circumstances under which it may be established;

123, support legislation to establish presumptive service connection for diseases and illnesses related to contaminants at Fort McClellan, Alabama;

124, amend the Department of Veterans' Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities for mental disorders;

127, increase the Home Improvement and Structural Alterations Grant;

129, support legislation to streamline and improve the requirements and processing of Specially Adapted Housing Grants in the Special Housing Adaptation Grant;

130, support legislation to ensure that total disability based on individual unemployability remains available for all veterans, regardless of age or receipt of any other earned federal benefits;

142, support legislation to reduce the 10-year rule for dependency and indemnity compensation;

143, support interest payments for Department of Veterans' Affairs retroactive awards of one year or more;

144, expand presumptions for service connection for former prisoners of war;

145, support legislation to provide a temporary total disability compensation rating for an amputee veteran while a new prosthetic device is developed and delivered;

147, support legislation authorizing the presumption of service-connection for all radiogenic diseases and eliminate dose estimate requirements;

148, support legislation to award special monthly compensation at R1 to veterans with anatomical loss or loss of use of three extremities;

Extend eligibility for veterans' mortgage protection life insurance to service-connected veterans rated permanently and totally disabled;

150, support legislation to cap attorneys' fees or benefits counseling and claims services before the Department of Veterans' Affairs;

151, support an increase in the Department of Veterans' Affairs Burial Allowance for service-connected veterans and provide automatic annual adjustments;

152, phew, support legislation to provide a realistic increase in the Department of Veterans' Affairs compensation rates to address loss of quality of life;

153, oppose subjecting disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation to means testing;

154, support a change in regulatory requirements rating under Section 4.30, Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, to provide for a temporary, total rating for incapacitation for more than 21 days;

Oppose – 155, oppose long-term rounding down of cost-of-living adjustments in veterans benefits;

156, amend the law to provide a 10-year protection period for service-connected disability ratings;

159, support legislation to provide for realistic cost-of-living allowances;

160, support legislation to exclude veterans' disability compensation from countable income for purposes of eligibility for benefits and services from other government programs;

163, remove the delimiting date for Persian Gulf veterans' illnesses;

200, consider treatment for presumptive service-connected conditions as a claim for Department of Veterans' Affairs compensation;

204, ensure that military occupation specialty is considered for establishing toxic exposure presumption;

205, resolution to end (Inaudible) double-jeopardy for veterans in receipt of benefits;

206, resolution to expand upon the PACT Act;

240, protection for Cold War nuclear weapons' technicians;

261, support legislation to change the AMA rule of evidence a veteran law judge can review;

277, increase grant funding for local veterans cemeteries;

281, support legislation providing that special separation benefit payments not be withheld from Department of Veterans' Affairs disability compensation payments;

283, require the Department of Veterans' Affairs request medical records prior to routine future examinations;

284, support compensable evaluations for certain disabilities currently at zero percent;

294, extend veterans benefits to survivors following the death of the veteran;

299, support legislation to remove personal identification information from veterans' claim files;

300, support outdated forms to be considered as an intent to file;

303, support legislation to provide for service connection for disabling conditions resulting from toxic and environmental exposures;

306, support meaningful claims and appeals reform;

307, support legislation for the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide childcare services assistance to veterans attending VA programs;

308, support legislation to increase disability compensation;

310, support legislation that requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to consider medical evidence supplied by licensed private health care providers; we're getting there now. (Applause)

318, oppose change of definition of an herbicide agent for the purposes of establishing service-connection for disabilities related to herbicide exposure;

324, support legislation to protect claimants from those charging fees to the Department of Veterans' Affairs claims preparation, presentation, or prosecution;

381, support the addition of toxic exposure risk activity for those exposed to Red Hill water contamination;

404, support legislation to improve the Veterans' Benefits Administration employee training;
418, support legislation to establish a supplementary Specially Adapted Housing grant;
419, support legislation to investigate cancer linked to intercontinental ballistic missile bases;
454, support elimination of the link between chronicity and continuity with the chronic diseases as listed in federal regulations;
470, eligibility for VA coverage of costs associated with delivery of an adaptive vehicle;
520, support legislation to grant entitlement to Aid and Attendance to a veteran's seriously-disabled child;
536, support legislation to remove the prohibition against DAV members who are federal employees from communicating on behalf of the DAV with federal agencies;
537, support legislation to establish multiple automobile grants for eligible veterans;
568, provide for a compensable rating for hearing-impaired veterans required to use hearing aids;
569, support a change in regulatory requirements for temporary total disability ratings;
570 support legislation to establish presumptive service connection for diseases and illnesses related to toxic exposure at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana;
571, support reforms relating to recovery of debts by the Department of Veterans' Affairs;
572, support legislation requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs to implement an optional path for telephonic initial contact for visually-impaired veterans;
(Whereupon, Adjutant Jesinoski spoke with Mr. Dilks.)

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION AND VETERANS RIGHTS CHAIRMAN DILKS: He asked if I was good and I didn't just give a "thumb's up." (Laughter)

573 – let's see after this one – remove requirements of manifestation of chloracne and porphyria cutanea tarda and acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy within one year of exposure to Agent Orange; I'm good. (Applause)

574, support legislation to include service near the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station as a radiation risk activity;

575, support legislation to include McMurdo Station Antarctica as a radiation risk activity;

576, provide medical benefits and compensation for Persian Gulf War veterans negatively impacted by Sarin Nerve Gas;

577, investigate the effects on veterans stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona;

578, investigate the effects on veterans stationed at Tindale Air Force Base, Florida;

579, investigate the effects on veterans stationed at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington;

580, investigate the effects on veterans stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

Comrade Commander, this completes the report of the Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights. (Applause) On behalf of the Committee I move for the adoption of these resolutions and that the Committee be discharged with the thanks of the national convention. (Applause)

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 1

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

WHEREAS, current law provides that service-connected veterans rated less than 50% disabled who retire from the armed forces based on length of service do not receive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in addition to full military retired pay; and

WHEREAS, proposed changes to military retirement plans and changes to the definition of longevity retired veterans by the Department of Defense could affect the veterans with service- connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, these disabled veterans must therefore surrender retired pay in an amount equal to the disability compensation they receive; and

WHEREAS, this offset is unfair to veterans who have served faithfully in military careers inasmuch as these veterans have earned their retired pay by virtue of their long service to the nation and wholly apart from disabilities due to military service; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to repeal the offset between military longevity retired pay and VA disability compensation.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 2
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE FOR PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE
CONNECTION FOR TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat or in certain occupational specialties have a high incidence of hearing loss or tinnitus as a direct result of acoustic trauma; and

WHEREAS, many pre-service and discharge examinations, particularly for World War II and Korean conflict veterans, were usually accomplished with the highly inaccurate “whispered voice” test; and

WHEREAS, veterans, in those cases, were not afforded a comprehensive audiological examination upon entrance and discharge from military service; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, the second-leading disability granted service connection by the Department of Veterans Affairs was for hearing loss or tinnitus, which recognizes the high incidence of acoustic trauma by veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports entitlement to service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran suffering from hearing loss or tinnitus, which manifests itself to any degree, and the evidence shows the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or military occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 3
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH PRESUMPTIVE
SERVICE CONNECTION FOR DISEASES AND ILLNESSES RELATED
TO TOXIC EXPOSURE AT GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE AND
MINOT AIR FORCE BASE IN NORTH DAKOTA

WHEREAS, the Grand Forks Air Force Base was established December 1, 1955; and the Minot Air Force Base was established January 10, 1957, in North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, several air and bombardment groups have trained at these bases, some starting during the Vietnam War to present day conflicts; and

WHEREAS, following these past and current conflicts, these sites have become a hub for supply transportation to the northern Pacific, Central United States, Alaska, Europe and the Middle East, including modern-day drone and unmanned flight squadron training and wartime operations; and

WHEREAS, the state of North Dakota’s Grand Forks Air Force Base and Minot Air Force Base oversaw the command, control and housing of over 1,000 Minuteman missile sites during their initial 1960 emplacement to the current 150-plus Minuteman missiles stationed around the Minot Air Force Base currently operating today; and

WHEREAS, missileers perform/performed their duties underground in small bunkers, encased in thick walls of concrete and steel; and

WHEREAS, they would remain there sometimes for days, and at that time were ready to turn the launch keys, if ordered to by the President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, due to the isolation and security of the locations of these missile sites, missileers were often exposed to toxins/chemicals when destroying classified documents/waste by unconventional means; and

WHEREAS, there was also the risk of radiation and contaminants exposure from the missiles themselves; and

WHEREAS, missileers were exposed to a variety of chemicals and toxins ranging from paint in small spaces to fumes from burning classified documents to aerial asbestos and radon exposure; and

WHEREAS, spills or leaks of propellant occurred frequently, contaminating silos for up to six weeks—a period in which the missiles were manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Forks Air Force Base and Minot Air Force Base have a history of toxic contamination, particularly with perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances; and

WHEREAS, these dangerous chemicals are usually dubbed PFAS or “forever chemicals,” encompassing over 9,000 different substances; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Air Force is aware that there are indications of a possible association between cancer and missile combat crew service at the Grand Forks Air Force Base and the Minot Air Force Base; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls upon Congress to immediately introduce legislation to authorize scientific studies of the environmental and toxic exposures at Grand Forks Air Force Base and Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to establish a concession of exposure to toxins and legislation to establish presumptive service connection for the veterans who were exposed at Grand Forks Air Force Base and Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 9

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REPLACE AND CLARIFY CURRENT INTENT TO FILE FEDERAL LAWS AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICIES

WHEREAS, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.155, indicates that upon receipt of an intent to file a claim, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will furnish the claimant with the appropriate application form prescribed by the Secretary; and

WHEREAS, if a formal application is received within one year, the effective date will be considered the date of receipt of the intent to file; and

WHEREAS, if a veteran files a claim on an incorrect formal claim form, the VA will send the veteran a request for application letter and request the veteran to submit a claim on the correct form; and

WHEREAS, in turn the veteran may lose that intent to file effective date for that claimed disability which was filed on the incorrect form; and

WHEREAS, the VA has tolling time limits to file claims for up to one year, for a condition such as temporary 100% claims based on surgery requiring convalesce or hospitalization; and

WHEREAS, based on current VA policy, the impact of assigning an active intent to file claim date to a formal claim on an incorrect form or temporary 100% claim is a loss of up to one year of benefits; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to replace and clarify current intent to file federal laws and VA policies to ensure veterans and their survivors have the most favorable interpretation of existing laws to include extended tolling and time frames to allow for correction and clarification of the claimants intentions, that are in line with the pro-veteran and non-adversarial policy currently in place at the VA.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 12

SUPPORT MODIFICATION OF CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) FORMS FOR RETRIEVAL OF RECORDS HOUSED AT VA COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES WHEN THE RECORDS ARE IDENTIFIED BY A VETERAN CLAIMANT TO SUPPORT A CLAIM FOR BENEFITS

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Veterans Claims Assistance Act (VCAA), as codified in title 38, United States Code, § 5103A and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, § 3.159, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must make reasonable efforts to assist a claimant in obtaining the evidence necessary to substantiate a claim for benefits; and

WHEREAS, a modification is needed to include VA community care medical facilities on VA claims forms, eliminating the need for a veteran to complete a separate VA Form 21-4142 and/or VA Form 21-4142A; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports modification of certain VA claims forms and current processes, to allow the department to request a veteran's records directly from a VA community care medical facility when identified by the claimant.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 22

COMPENSATE PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS SUFFERING FROM ILLNESSES CIRCUMSTANTIALLY LINKED TO THEIR SERVICE IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

WHEREAS, DAV has a significant concern regarding the multitude of ailments reported by a growing number of Persian Gulf War veterans who were exposed to both identified and unknown health hazards; and

WHEREAS, Persian Gulf War veterans were exposed to numerous and various environmental health hazards, including smoke from oil field fires and other petroleum agents, depleted uranium, chemical and biological elements, desert parasites, vaccines, chemoprophylactic agents and vehicle paints; and

WHEREAS, primary investigations and multifarious studies have thus far failed to identify the source or sources of these ailments; and

WHEREAS, the scientific/medical community's inability to identify the source(s) and pathological nature of the disease has caused considerable anxiety for these veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, there appears to be a commonality of ailments plaguing Persian Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, these ailments have been unofficially labeled "Persian Gulf Syndrome," "Multiple Chemical Sensitivity" and "Chronic Fatigue Syndrome"; and

WHEREAS, based on Government Accounting Office (GAO) Report (GAO 17-511) findings, approval rates for Gulf War Illness claims are about three times lower than for all other claimed disabilities, which is due, in large part, to current law requiring veterans to suffer from an "undiagnosed" or "medically unexplained" illness for eligibility to receive disability compensation for medical conditions occurring in Persian Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, based on the available medical evidence medical examiners must rule out all known diseases that could cause the veteran's symptoms for it to be determined as an undiagnosed illness or unexplainable illness; and

WHEREAS, clinicians are highly unlikely to provide a diagnosis of an undiagnosed illness or unexplainable illness in most cases, creating an unfair standard for Gulf War veterans to be properly service connected for conditions related to their military service; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the requirements in the existing law, these brave veterans suffering from these unknown ailments are often prevented from obtaining service connection and providing for their own basic needs and for the needs of their families; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, vigorously supports the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) expeditious handling of Persian Gulf War veterans' claims and the payment of fair and just compensation for those diagnosed and undiagnosed conditions associated with their service in the Persian Gulf theater or related exposures to certain chemical, biological and environmental toxins; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV strongly urges that these Persian Gulf War veterans continue to receive priority medical treatment for those ailments that may be associated with their service in the Persian Gulf; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we vehemently urge the VA, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Health and Human Services to continue to cooperate in tests and studies to unlock the mysteries surrounding the ailments suffered by Persian Gulf War veterans, including the possibility of exposure to chemical agents by United States military personnel.

* * *

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* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 23
SUPPORT SUFFICIENT, TIMELY AND PREDICTABLE
FUNDING FOR ALL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
PROGRAMS, BENEFITS AND SERVICES

WHEREAS, DAV believes that wounded, injured and ill veterans, through their extraordinary sacrifices and service, earned the right to health care, benefits and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, this nation’s first concern should be to fulfill its obligation to those who served in the military services in defense of this country; and

WHEREAS, DAV worked for more than two decades to reform the budget process in order to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for VA health care programs; and

WHEREAS, DAV developed and supported new legislation to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for VA health care through the technique of advance appropriations, as well as through new transparency and accountability requirements covering VA health care budget requests; and

WHEREAS, the adoption of budget caps and sequestration have often limited the ability of congressional appropriations committees to fully fund all veterans programs, services and benefits; and

WHEREAS, spurred by DAV, Congress enacted Public Law 111–81, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009, a law that requires advance appropriations for the VA’s three medical care accounts that fund VA health care programs; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted Public Law 113–235, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015, that requires advance appropriations for three mandatory accounts of the Veterans Benefits Administration, compensation and pensions, readjustment benefits, and veterans insurance and indemnities; and

WHEREAS, the VA’s leadership, employees and veterans served by VA health care facilities have universally reported that advance appropriations have allowed the VA to more efficiently and effectively deliver timely, quality health care to enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA health care programs and veterans mandatory benefits have largely been protected from the adverse effects of government shutdowns; and

WHEREAS, the remainder of the VA's discretionary budget, which includes information technology (IT), medical and prosthetic research, construction and general operating expenses— primarily the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)—could benefit from the timeliness and predictability offered by advance appropriations, particularly when unrelated budget stalemates, continuing resolutions and sequestration occur; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 111–81 required the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study and report to Congress and the public on the VA's budget submissions in fiscal years 2011, 2012 and 2013, including an evaluation of the VA's budget estimates compared to the forecasts made by the VA's internal actuarial model; and

WHEREAS, GAO reported significant findings of unjustified, questionable changes the VA made during the internal budget development process, limitations of budget justifications and questionable reliability of proposed savings estimates; and

WHEREAS, recent budget requests for advance appropriations by the Administration and advance appropriations amounts provided for by Congress continue to be insufficient to meet the full demand for VA benefits and services; and

WHEREAS, DAV and congressional sponsors of the advance appropriations concept anticipated that full implementation of Public Law 111–81 would require continued oversight from Congress, DAV and others; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to authorize advance appropriations for all of the VA's discretionary and mandatory budget, which would extend advance appropriations to include IT, medical and prosthetic research, major construction, minor construction, State Home construction, state cemetery construction grants, general operating expenses (VBA and general administration), the National Cemetery Administration, the Office of Inspector General and all other mandatory benefits; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV continues to call on Congress and the VA to fully and faithfully implement Public Law 111–81, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009, to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans health care; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to permanently extend the GAO study and reporting requirements included in the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 24

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO INCLUDE CHILDREN IN LEGAL CUSTODY AS A DEPENDENT FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PURPOSES

WHEREAS, per section 1072(2)(1), title 10, United States Code (USC), military service members and military retirees can claim a dependent child that is an unmarried person who is placed in the legal custody of the member or former member as a result of an order of a court of competent jurisdiction in the United States (or possession of the United States); and

WHEREAS, 38 USC §101(4)(A), in part, defines dependent child as a person under the age of 18 years, or who before attaining the age of 18 became permanently incapable of support, or who after attaining the age of 18 but not after attaining the age of 23 is attending an education or training program; and

WHEREAS, a child is a person who is a legitimate child, or a legally adopted child, or a stepchild who is a member of the veteran's household; and

WHEREAS, when a child is placed in the legal custody or guardianship of a veteran, the child does not meet the above criteria as a dependent for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) purposes; however, the child would be recognized by the Department of Defense, therefore creating an inequity; and

WHEREAS, the veteran and the child are placed at a disadvantage of not being able to utilize VA programs and benefits; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to amend the definition of a child to include those placed into legal custody or guardianship of the veteran, even if on a temporary basis.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 25
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE AND REFORM
DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION BENEFITS

WHEREAS, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) was created in 1993 and has only been minimally adjusted since then; and

WHEREAS, DIC payments were intended to provide surviving spouses with the means to maintain some semblance of economic stability; and

WHEREAS, survivors who rely solely on the disabled veteran's compensation face significant financial hardships upon the death of the veteran; and

WHEREAS, monthly benefits for survivors of federal civil service retirees are calculated as a percentage of the civil service retiree's Federal Employees Retirement (FERS) or Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) benefits, up to 55%; and

WHEREAS, recent legislation has reduced the survivor's remarriage age from 57 to 55; and

WHEREAS, now survivors in receipt of DIC benefits risk losing entitlement if they remarry before the age of 55; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, strongly supports legislation that improves and reforms DIC benefits to include increasing the monthly amount and lowering the remarriage age for survivors of disabled veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 26
SUPPORT LEGISLATION RECOGNIZING RACIAL TRAUMA AS A
STRESSOR FOR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

WHEREAS, current regulations require credible supporting evidence that the claimed in-service stressor occurred (section 3.304(f), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations); and

WHEREAS, that regulation currently recognizes five situations where the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has specifically set out criteria for special consideration of the stressor: (1) diagnosed during service, (2) combat, (3) fear of hostile military or terrorist activity, (4) prisoner of war and (5) in-service personal assault; and

WHEREAS, a service member experiencing a racial trauma is exposed to an unexpected scenario in which they are largely helpless and over which they have no control; and

WHEREAS, their response may include feelings of anger, confusion, disbelief, dysphoria, fear, feelings of desocialization or derealization, hopelessness, humiliation, rage, shame and shock; and

WHEREAS, these recognized traumatic reactions may result in the disabled veteran experiencing and manifesting symptom clusters consistent with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, including:

- Reexperiencing through distressing memories, flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, nightmares and physical and emotional distress at reminders;
- Avoidance through agoraphobia, attempting not to think about it, avoidance of people the same or similar race that is responsible for the racial trauma, isolation and substance use/abuse;
- Negative alterations in cognitions manifested by the presence of anger, anxiety, belief that the world is unsafe, depression, guilt, helplessness and/or hopelessness, horror, inability to trust, self-blame and/or self-doubt;
- Alterations in arousal and reactivity that may include anger/rage with little provocation, concentration and memory problems, diminished interest or participation in prior significant activities, guilt, hypervigilance, fear, increased startle response, irritability, reckless or self-destructive behavior, reduction in positive emotions, sadness, shame, sleep impairment, social withdrawal and verbal and/or physical aggression; and

WHEREAS, the law and regulations currently in effect require the veteran to provide "credible supporting evidence that the claimed in-service stressor occurred"; and

WHEREAS, this limitation on the law limits the disabled veteran's ability to prove their case where the assailants may have been in their chain of command and therefore would be the ones responsible for ensuring the documentation, or lack thereof, of the incident; and

WHEREAS, even in the presence of a racial trauma perpetuated outside of the chain of command, the disabled veteran may not have been able to ensure formal documentation either through invalidation by those members of their command or due to fear and shame of reprisal or invalidation; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to specifically include racial trauma as one of the identified categories of stressors in 38 CFR §3.304(f).

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 27

OPPOSE REGIONAL DISPERSION OF THE BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS

WHEREAS, veterans and other claimants for veterans benefits may appeal ratings and other decisions of the various and geographically dispersed benefit offices and medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, inaccuracy and lack of uniformity are pervasive among the claims decisions of the many VA field offices; and

WHEREAS, one board, the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) in Washington, D.C., hears all appeals; and

WHEREAS, appellants, Board members and taxpayers derive numerous benefits from an appellate board housed in one centralized location, some of the more obvious of which are:

- Availability of the collective expertise of the entire board;
- Professional interaction and association among Board members and staff;
- Shared and uniform training;
- Common and shared goals and responsibilities;
- Economies of scale from pooled resources and the most efficient workload distribution, with the flexibility and capacity to readjust the workload as necessary between members and support staff;
- A positive environment and employee incentives for developing creative solutions and innovations to meet and overcome the challenges inherent in a system of mass adjudication of claims;
- More efficient and effective centralized case management and storage;
- More effective centralized Board administration and hands-on employee oversight; and

WHEREAS, Congress created the Board after repeated failed experiments with various configurations of regional appellate panels that were plagued by persistent inefficiencies and problems and were proven impractical and poorly suited to properly dispose of veterans' appeals; and

WHEREAS, such regional reorganization of the Board would be extremely unwise, wholly unwarranted and not in the best interests of veterans or taxpayers; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, categorically opposes any decentralization of the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 28

Support Legislation to Require the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to Decide Each of Appellant's Assignments of Error

WHEREAS, Congress passed the Veterans' Judicial Review Act of 1988 (VJRA) and created the United States Court of Veterans Appeals (currently the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims) (Court); and

WHEREAS, the VJRA granted the Court the authority to decide all relevant questions of law and to hold unlawful and set aside or reverse any finding of material fact adverse to the claimant, which is clearly erroneous; and

WHEREAS, due to long delays in claims processing at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), it can take veterans years to get their appeals before the Court; and

WHEREAS, in many appeals, the Court will ignore the appellants' legal arguments and remand an appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) based on the General Counsel's confession of error that the Board failed to provide adequate reasons or bases for its decision to deny the benefit; and

WHEREAS, a remand due to lack of reasons or bases allows the VA to reopen the evidentiary record and obtain other evidence to support the continuation of the denial; and

WHEREAS, a veteran must appeal to the Court a second time and, in some cases, a third or fourth time to obtain a decision on the merits of their appeal; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that would require the Court to decide each assignment of error and to reverse any such errors found; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should enact legislation providing the Court should have the authority to modify or remand any Board decision found to contain any error or errors, that the

authority to modify should include the power to order an award of benefits in appropriate cases, and that an appellant should be expressly permitted to waive confessions of error made by the appellee.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 29
SUPPORT THE ELIMINATION OF THE 30-DAY REQUIREMENT
FOR DISEASES ASSOCIATED WITH EXPOSURE TO CONTAMINANTS
IN THE WATER SUPPLY AT CAMP LEJEUNE

WHEREAS, section 3.307(a)(7)(i), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), provides contaminants in the water supply means the volatile organic compounds (VOC) trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), benzene and vinyl chloride were in the on-base water supply systems located at United States Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune; and

WHEREAS, 38 CFR §3.307(a)(7)(iii) notes that a veteran, or former reservist or member of the National Guard, who had no less than 30 days (consecutive or nonconsecutive) of service at Camp Lejeune during the period beginning on August 1, 1953, and ending on December 31, 1987, shall be presumed to have been exposed during such service to the contaminants in the water supply; and

WHEREAS, the 30-day requirement is not based on the potential systemic, external and internal exposures to the VOCs; and

WHEREAS, review of the National Research Council, Committee on Contaminated Drinking Water at Camp Lejeune study, Contaminated Water Supplies at Camp Lejeune: Assessing Potential Health Effects, notes that the internal doses of TCE from showering provide inhalation and dermal exposure that is equivalent with ingesting two liters of water; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) notice of proposed rulemaking on the above-referenced subject, as published in the Federal Register on September 9, 2016, notes, "VA experts agree that there is no science to support a specific minimum exposure level for any of the conditions"; and

WHEREAS, the VA plainly states the 30-day requirement is intended to provide consistency with the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012, Public Law 112-154; and

WHEREAS, the VA notes in multiple instances that the 30-day requirement is to keep consistency with the requirement for health care but does not assert that there is a scientific basis or legal requirement for the 30-day period; and

WHEREAS, the 30-day requirement is not consistent with any other laws or regulations providing presumptive service connection for exposure to toxic substances, such as veterans exposed to herbicide agents during service in Vietnam; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, supports the elimination of the 30-day requirement for diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune as it is not based on the potential systemic, external and internal, exposures to the VOCs; predicated on any science; based on any legal requirements; nor consistent with existing laws and regulations concerning presumptive service connection for exposure to toxic substances.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 30
SUPPORT USING THE PROPOSED REDUCTION DUE PROCESS
FOR ALL DISABILITY EVALUATION REDUCTIONS

WHEREAS, section 3.105(e), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, requires that a reduction in a disability evaluation which results in a reduction of compensation payments or the overall combined evaluation must include a notice of a proposed reduction with all material facts, a 60-day period to present additional evidence and the right to request a predetermination hearing prior to a final reduction decision; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that if a reduction in a disability evaluation does not result in a reduction of compensation payments, overall combined evaluation, a proposed reduction is not warranted; and

WHEREAS, in many instances, the VA will grant increases and new benefits in the same decision as reducing a disability evaluation but not changing the previous combined evaluation, thus leaving the veteran without proposed reduction due process, to include submitting new evidence and requesting a predetermination prior to a final reduction decision; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the proposed reduction due process be applied to all reductions of a disability evaluation even when it does not change compensation payments or the overall combined evaluation.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 31

OPPOSE ALL ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THE BASIS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SCHEDULE FOR RATING DISABILITIES FROM THE “AVERAGE IMPAIRMENTS OF EARNINGS CAPACITY” STANDARD

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD) requires that “ratings shall be based, as far as practicable, upon the average impairments of earning capacity,” as stated in section 1155, title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, the standard of “average impairments of earning capacity” was first adopted under the War Risk Insurance Act of 1917, and except for a short-lived alteration between 1924 and 1933 attempting to reflect individual occupational factors, this philosophy has formed the basis for determining levels of veterans disability compensation for over a century; and

WHEREAS, the current VASRD has been updated, revised and modified numerous times to reflect advances in medical knowledge, diagnosis, treatment and technology for injuries, illnesses and disabilities related to military service, but the standard of average impairments of earnings capacity has remained unchanged due to its practicality, equity and fairness to disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, determining rating levels based on the average impairments of earning capacity ensures that veterans who have similar manifestations of the same disabilities are treated equally and fairly without consideration of their age, education, work experience or current work status; and

WHEREAS, by basing the VASRD on the average impairments of earnings capacity, rather than on individual measurements of earnings loss or functionality, disabled veterans are actually encouraged to seek vocational rehabilitation training in order to find jobs and become more productive wage earners without fear of being penalized for doing so; and

WHEREAS, the VA is currently updating the entire VASRD and has committed to update each body of the section of the VASRD every five years, and throughout this process numerous proposals have been made, and will be considered, to alter the VASRD; and

WHEREAS, any attempt to replace average impairment of earnings capacity with a new standard based on individual earnings loss or measurements of functionality would dramatically alter the purpose and effectiveness of the VA disability compensation program, create disincentives for veterans interested in rehabilitation and work, and lead to reductions in compensation for millions of disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, any attempt to eliminate all consideration of impairments and impacts outside of the workplace fails to properly recognize that disability affects a veteran’s entire life—including social, marital, familial, emotional and spiritual aspects—all of which have some effect on their earnings capacity; and

WHEREAS, any attempt to model the VA disability compensation program on the Social Security Disability Insurance or workers’ compensation programs fails to recognize that those programs have separate purposes based on injuries and illnesses incurred in the civilian workplace that do not compare with the unique challenges faced and sacrifices made by veterans who have served in our armed forces; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any attempt to change or modify the VASRD, or the statute and regulations underlying it, which would change the long-standing, accepted and successful policy that ratings shall be based, as far as practicable, upon the average impairments of earning capacity.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 37

OPPOSE ANY RECOMMENDATION BY ANY COMMISSION OR OTHER SOURCE TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE BENEFITS FOR DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, American citizens owe their freedoms and way of life to disabled veterans who made extraordinary personal sacrifices and who suffer lifelong disabilities as a consequence; and

WHEREAS, those who serve in our armed forces stand ready to endure any hardships and to be exposed to any hazards on behalf of their country and our citizens; and

WHEREAS, our government did not hesitate in asking them to give life or limb, if necessary; and WHEREAS, our elected officials surely should not renege on our reciprocal obligation when our disabled veterans ask for so comparatively little in return; and

WHEREAS, we, as a nation, owe no more important indebtedness nor greater moral obligation than the indebtedness and obligation we have to disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, some elected officials nonetheless prefer to minimize or ignore the suffering of disabled veterans, despite this debt and this national responsibility; and

WHEREAS, any effort on the part of legislators to find ways to avoid compensating disabled veterans, especially in time of war, is unconscionable; and

WHEREAS, honorable and great nations of conscience do not abandon their wounded, injured or ill wartime veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, reminds our elected officials of our undebatable responsibility to fairly and fully compensate veterans for all the effects of disabilities incurred or aggravated in the line of duty as provided for in the equitable standards of current law and regulations; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV vigorously opposes any recommendations made for the purpose of reducing, adding limitations on or eliminating benefits for service-connected disabled veterans and their families.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 38

OPPOSE REDUCTION, TAXATION OR ELIMINATION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

WHEREAS, veterans benefits are earned benefits paid to veterans and their families for their service to the nation; and

WHEREAS, veterans benefits are part of a covenant between our nation and its defenders; and

WHEREAS, certain government leaders have continued to attack veterans benefits in an attempt to tax those benefits, reduce them or eliminate them completely; and

WHEREAS, these attacks recur with regularity and serious intent; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, vigorously opposes reduction, taxation or elimination of veterans benefits.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 50

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REFORM AND IMPROVE SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS LIFE INSURANCE

WHEREAS, the Congress of the United States created a modernized service-disabled veterans life insurance program, which replaced the previous Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI) program on January 1, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the modernized insurance program allows veterans to enroll at any time, which is a change from the existing S-DVI, which only allowed veterans to apply within two years of a Department of Veterans Affairs decision that established a new grant of service connection; and

WHEREAS, veterans enrolled in the modernized insurance program may elect to be insured in the amounts of \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000 and \$40,000; and

WHEREAS, inflation has significantly increased, and the value of the maximum amount of S-DVI coverage has significantly decreased since the existing coverage amounts were set in law; and

WHEREAS, the previous S-DVI provided a waiver of premiums on the basic coverage of \$10,000 for eligible totally disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, the modernized insurance program does not provide a waiver of premiums at any amount for totally disabled veterans, effectively eliminating an existing benefit for future eligible veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports strong oversight of the implementation of the modernized service-disabled veterans insurance program by Congress and chartered veterans service organizations; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports a waiver of premiums for totally disabled veterans; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV continues to support an increase in the maximum amount of coverage allowed by the service-disabled veterans insurance.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 51
SUPPORT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MODERNIZATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND
IMPROVEMENTS TO INCLUDE DIGITAL SHARING, ADEQUATE
FUNDING AND IMPROVED ACCESS FOR DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, updated and modern information technology (IT) with digital sharing of information within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) is critical to the delivery of VA health care, VA benefits and VA educational services; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) made a critical decision to transform its paper-based claims system and replaced it with electronic streamlined business processes such as the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), National Work Queue (NWQ), Case Flow, eBenefits and the Stakeholder Enterprise Portal (SEP); and

WHEREAS, several VA sites, including VA forms and applications, have been reported as not having ease of access by visually impaired veterans; and

WHEREAS, veterans service organizations (VSOs) providing representation for veterans and their families rely on VA systems, while VBA has determined to no longer fund upgrades or updates to some of the existing programs; and

WHEREAS, lacking appropriate IT funding led to the Veteran Readiness and Employment's (VR&E) \$12 million IT debacle and the Education Service's continuing problems in making accurate payments under the new GI Bill program; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) will be integrating the new VA Electronic Health Records (EHR) Modernization program, a commercial health IT program in collaboration with the DOD, over the next 10 years, while its existing Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) program will remain throughout the implementation phase; and

WHEREAS, the cost of full integration of the Oracle Cerner EHR is projected at \$16 billion over the next 10 years, with \$5.8 billion of those funds set aside to manage and support the current VistA infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, VHA and VBA must compete with other offices and agencies within the VA for the limited IT funding available each year, delaying development and deployment of critical IT systems and programming; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports reforming and improving the budgeting and funding of VA IT systems for each individual department within the VA; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports secure and protected digital information sharing between the DOD and VA, as well as sharing within VA agencies; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports improving IT access for VSO representatives and veterans with disabilities, including those who are visually impaired.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 52
SUPPORT REAUTHORIZATION OF THE PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS ACT

WHEREAS, the Persian Gulf War Veterans Act of 1998, codified at section 1118, title 38, United States Code, provides for presumptive service connection for diseases related thereto; and

WHEREAS, subsection (b) provided requirements for the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to follow when prescribing new presumptive diseases, including determinations of positive association of diagnosed or undiagnosed illnesses; reports from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM); and positive significantly statistical association; and

WHEREAS, subsection (c) provided that, not later than 60 days after the date on which the Secretary receives a report from NASEM, the Secretary shall determine whether or not a presumption is warranted for each illness covered by the report; and

WHEREAS, if the Secretary determines that a presumption of service connection is warranted, the Secretary shall, not later than 60 days after making the determination, issue proposed regulations setting forth the Secretary's determination; and

WHEREAS, if the Secretary determines that a presumption of service connection is not warranted, the Secretary shall, not later than 60 days after making the determination, publish in the Federal

Register a notice of the determination, and the notice shall include an explanation of the scientific basis for the determination; and

WHEREAS, if the Secretary determines that a presumption of service connection is warranted, the Secretary shall, not later than 60 days after making the determination, issue proposed regulations setting forth the Secretary's determination; and

WHEREAS, the provisions of the Persian Gulf War Veterans Act of 1998, as noted above in subsection (b) and subsection (c), expired on September 30, 2011; and

WHEREAS, there are no longer any requirements for a positive association or time requirements for the Secretary to act on scientific reports; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to reauthorize all sections of the Persian Gulf War Veterans Act of 1998 to ensure that the presumptive process for diseases related to toxic exposures, as noted, remains available for veterans exposed.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 53

SUPPORT REAUTHORIZATION OF THE AGENT ORANGE ACT

WHEREAS, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, codified at section 1116, title 38, United States Code, provides for presumptive service connection for diseases related thereto; and

WHEREAS, subsection (b) provided requirements for the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to follow when prescribing new presumptive diseases, including determinations of positive association of diagnosed or undiagnosed illnesses; reports from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM); and positive significantly statistical association; and

WHEREAS, subsection (c) provided that, not later than 60 days after the date on which the Secretary receives a report from NASEM, the Secretary shall determine whether or not a presumption is warranted for each illness covered by the report; and

WHEREAS, if the Secretary determines that a presumption of service connection is warranted, the Secretary shall, not later than 60 days after making the determination, issue proposed regulations setting forth the Secretary's determination; and

WHEREAS, if the Secretary determines that a presumption of service connection is not warranted, the Secretary shall, not later than 60 days after making the determination, publish in the Federal Register a notice of the determination, and the notice shall include an explanation of the scientific basis for the determination; and

WHEREAS, the provisions of the Agent Orange Act of 1991, as noted above in subsection (b) and subsection (c), expired on September 30, 2015; and

WHEREAS, there are no longer any requirements for a positive association or time requirements for the Secretary to act on scientific reports; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to reauthorize all sections of the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to ensure that the presumptive process for diseases related to toxic exposures, as noted, remains available for veterans exposed.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 54

SUPPORT RESOURCES AND OVERSIGHT OF THE APPEALS PROCESS

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implemented the Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act (AMA), which impacts decisions at the Veterans Benefits Administration, the existing legacy appeals and AMA appeals at the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board); and

WHEREAS, in fiscal year (FY) 2022, the Board issued 95,294 decisions, and although this is the fourth consecutive year over producing over 95,000 decisions, it is the lowest amount in the last three years; and

WHEREAS, in January 2022, over 200,000 appeals were pending at the Board and over 84,000 of them were awaiting hearings; and

WHEREAS, in FY 2022, the Board scheduled over 56,000 hearings; however, only 30,000 hearings were held; and

WHEREAS, hearing requests vastly increased in FY 2022, and at the beginning of FY 2023, the Board had over 74,000 hearings pending; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the Board received an additional 20 veterans law judges; and
WHEREAS, at the beginning of FY 2023, over 206,000 appeals were pending with 74,000 awaiting hearings; and

WHEREAS, for FY 2024, DAV and the Independent Budget recommended an additional 20 VLJs and an additional 200 employees in other positions to assist in driving down the backlog of appeals and hearings; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on Congress to provide effective and continued oversight of the legacy and AMA appeals processes to ensure that adequate resources are provided to resolve the backlog of legacy appeals and the backlog of pending hearings at the Board, as well as provide regular oversight to monitor and measure the VA's progress so these reforms achieve their intended purpose.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 60

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ALLOW A VETERAN PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED DUE TO SERVICE-CONNECTED CONDITIONS TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE DEPENDENTS COMPENSATION FOR THEIR ADULT CHILD ATTENDING SCHOOL WHILE THAT CHILD IS IN RECEIPT OF DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER CHAPTER 35

WHEREAS, veterans are able to claim their adult child attending school as a dependent while that child continues to attend school; and

WHEREAS, current law and regulations mandate that once a child establishes entitlement to Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) benefits, the parent veteran is forbidden to also claim that child as a dependent on their compensation claim; and

WHEREAS, the parent veteran is not directly involved in the child's claim other than having established permanent and total (P&T) status where the child, usually with the assistance of a veteran counselor at the school, files their own claim; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not share the claim information of the adult child attending school with the parent veteran because an individual over the age of 18 is considered to be capable of handling their own matters, and it would be a privacy violation to inform the parent veteran of the child's claim status; and

WHEREAS, the parent veteran is frequently charged with overpayment for having received the dependency compensation while the child is also receiving DEA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to allow for a P&T veteran to continue to claim their adult child attending school as a dependent while that child is separately in receipt of DEA under chapter 35.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 61

SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION TO INCLUDE CONDITIONS OF THE THYROID AS A PRESUMPTIVE GULF WAR DISORDER

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has an established list of disabilities that are presumptively associated with service in Southwest Asia (SWA); and

WHEREAS, SWA refers to Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the airspace above these locations for certain veterans section 3.317(e)(2), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, the VA recognizes signs or symptoms of undiagnosed illness and medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses associated with SWA service to include (1) fatigue, (2) signs or symptoms involving skin, (3) headache, (4) muscle pain, (5) joint pain, (6) neurological signs or symptoms, (7) neuropsychological signs or symptoms, (8) signs or symptoms involving the respiratory system (upper or lower), (9) sleep disturbances, (10) gastrointestinal signs or symptoms, (11) cardiovascular signs or symptoms, (12) abnormal weight loss and (13) menstrual disorders; and

WHEREAS, 10 of the common symptoms of a thyroid disorder include fatigue, weight changes (gain too much weight with hypothyroid and too little weight with hyperthyroid); muscle and joint pain; neck swelling (goiter); hair and skin changes; bowel changes, menstrual abnormalities; depression; carpal tunnel (weakness or tingling in the arms, wrists, hands and legs); and, finally, family history; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, proposes that the VA immediately establish studies to determine whether thyroid disorder(s) is more common in veterans with SWA service than the general population, given that many of the common symptoms of a thyroid disorder are also the currently recognized signs or symptoms of undiagnosed illness and medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses associated with SWA service.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 62
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REFORM FUGITIVE FELON STATUS
WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, at present, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a recognized policy denying compensation, pension or dependent benefits to an individual listed as a fugitive felon; and

WHEREAS, at present, the VA accepts indications of fugitive status from local authorities, but the VA does not require information from the originating agency that any attempt has ever been made to locate the alleged fugitive, and the VA does not seek clarification on whether or not the claimant was actually fleeing or otherwise avoiding prosecution, custody or confinement, the criteria for establishing fugitive status; and

WHEREAS, the presumption by the VA against the claimant results in loss of VA benefits and significant hardships by the erroneously identified claimant in attempting to reinstate their benefits; and

WHEREAS, the individual often has years of government bureaucracy to overcome, despite the fact that they have lived in the same location for years, without anyone actually attempting to contact them prior to the VA's declaration of fugitive status; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation that requires the VA to verify that the originating agency has actually attempted to locate the claimant and that the claimant has fled justice or was otherwise avoiding prosecution, custody or confinement, before the VA can seize their current benefits and establish overpayment for prior benefits dispensed.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 63
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO INCREASE MAXIMUM
EVALUATION FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED HEADACHES

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) rating schedule notes that the minimum schedular rating for consideration of Individual Unemployability is 60% for a single condition, or a combination of 70% with one of them being at least 40%; and

WHEREAS, at present, a veteran with the highest schedular rating for headaches, 50%, must be shown to have a very frequent completely prostrating and prolonged attack productive of severe economic inadaptability, as stated at diagnostic code 8100, section 4.124a, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, a veteran currently in receipt of the maximum 50% rating for headaches due to very frequent completely prostrating and prolonged attacks productive of severe economic inadaptability would not also qualify for consideration of a claim for Individual Unemployability based on that single disability; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, proposes that the VA amend its regulations to increase the maximum evaluation for an individual with migraine headaches from the current 50% evaluation to a 60% rating to more appropriately address the industrial impairment attributable to that level of disability.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 64
ESTABLISH IMMEDIATE AUTHORIZATION OF GRANTS BY THE BOARD OF
VETERANS' APPEALS ON ALL CASES ADVANCED ON THE DOCKET

WHEREAS, in a case before the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board), an appellant can request the case advanced on the docket due to financial hardship, homelessness, and/or a serious illness; and

WHEREAS, once the Board grants an appeal that is advanced on the docket, it is then sent to either the agency of original jurisdiction (AOJ) or the Appeals Resource Center (ARC) for the decision to be granted, authorized and promulgated prior to payment of benefits to an appellant; and

WHEREAS, the average processing time of these cases by the AOJ or the ARC can be more than 90 days; and

WHEREAS, many appellants with serious illness die prior to the grant and authorization; and

WHEREAS, this delay defeats the purpose of the Board granting a case to be advanced on the docket; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the allocation of Department of Veterans Affairs resources either to the Board of Veterans' Appeals or via the National Work Queue, to grant, authorize and promulgate all cases advanced on the docket and granted by the Board of Veterans' Appeals within 30 days of the decision.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 66
SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR STUDIES AND PRESUMPTIVE
DISEASES RELATED TO PFAS EXPOSURE

WHEREAS, the acronym "PFAS" relates to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances that are man-made chemicals with at least one fully fluorinated carbon atom, are present in fire-fighting foams and do not break down in the environment; and

WHEREAS, in the 1970s, the Department of Defense (DOD) began using aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) to fight fuel fires and emergency response is a major source of PFAS contamination of ground water on military bases; and

WHEREAS, according to 2023 DoD data, more than 700 U.S. military sites are known or likely to have discharged PFAS, typically from the use of firefighting foam.; and

WHEREAS, in March 2020, DOD released new data showing that more than 600 military sites have been contaminated with PFAS, far more than previously disclosed; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the NASEM report Guidance on PFAS Exposure, Testing, and Clinical Follow-Up found sufficient evidence of an association with PFAS exposure with decreased antibody response, dyslipidemia and increased risk of kidney cancer and the report found limited or suggestive evidence of an association with PFAS exposure with increased risk of breast cancer; liver enzyme alterations; increased risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension; increased risk of testicular cancer; thyroid disease and dysfunction and increased risk of ulcerative colitis; and

WHEREAS, in August 2022, a large clinical study found that people with high levels of PFAS in their blood are more likely to develop hepatocellular carcinoma, the most common form of liver cancer, as noted in the Journal of High Energy Physics (JHEP) 2022; and

WHEREAS, in Environmental Health Perspectives published in July 2023, researchers found that elevated blood levels of perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), a specific type of PFAS, was associated with higher risk of developing testicular cancer; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to establish and maintain a registry for eligible individuals who may have been exposed to PFAS to ascertain and monitor the health effects of the exposure of members of the Armed Forces; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports the establishment of presumption of service connection for PFAS and establish presumptive diseases related thereto.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 67
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE STUDIES AND
HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS RESULTING FROM TOXIC
EXPOSURES AT KARSHI-KHANABAD AIR BASE, UZBEKISTAN

WHEREAS, over 15,000 U.S. service members were deployed to the Karshi-Khanabad Air Base (K2) in Uzbekistan from 2001 to 2005; and

WHEREAS, while it was a Soviet air base, K2 had contained chemical weapons, enriched uranium, and soil saturated with fuels and other solvents; and

WHEREAS, recently declassified Department of Defense documents reveal that U.S. service members were exposed to multiple toxic hazards while stationed at K2, including jet fuel, kerosene, dangerous levels of particulate matter in the air, as well as exposure to depleted uranium; and

WHEREAS, other health assessment tests found the base had elevated levels of volatile organic compounds, and total petroleum hydrocarbons were detected at numerous locations throughout K2; and

WHEREAS, air samples at the base found elevated levels of tetrachloroethylene, as well as the residuals of chemical weapons including cyanide in the showers; and

WHEREAS, a 2015 U.S. Army study found that veterans exposed at K2 have a 500% increased likelihood of developing cancer, to include malignant melanoma and neoplasms of the lymphatic and hematopoietic tissues; and

WHEREAS, veterans may not know for years or decades about the toxic or environmental conditions they were exposed to during military service; and

WHEREAS, returning from war, veterans may suffer from disabling conditions that are not immediately identified as a result of such exposures; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not recognize or acknowledge service at K2 with a high probability of exposure to any toxic exposures; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the recognition of the existence of toxic substances and environmental hazards at K2 and concession of exposure by all U.S. service members who served at K2 between January 1, 2001, and December 31, 2005; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to grant K2 veterans eligibility to VA health care, to include hospital care, medical services and nursing home care, by expanding the definition of toxic exposures in section 1710, title 38, United States Code; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports studies to identify illnesses and diseases that have a positive association, including a sufficient, limited or suggestive association, with exposure to any toxic substances or high levels of particulate matter and dust resulting from open burn pits that may have been at K2.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 68
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXPAND DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS MENTAL HEALTH TRANSITION SERVICES
TO ALL SERVICE MEMBERS UPON DISCHARGE

WHEREAS, at present, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides limited mental health transition services to individuals who have incurred a traumatic physical injury; and

WHEREAS, individual service members being discharged with severe mental health issues due to traumatic experiences incurred on active duty are not being identified for enrollment in mental health transition services; and

WHEREAS, the VA has committed to expanding its suicide prevention programs; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports enacting legislation that would expand the provision of mental health transition services to individuals who have been, or are reasonably suspected to have been, exposed to traumatic events including, but not limited to, military sexual trauma, combat or other exposure to a hostile military or terrorist activity, natural or man-made disaster, or an individual disaster that would reasonably be believed by the layperson to have caused significant emotional distress.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 69
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS TO VERIFY DEPENDENCY STATUS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE AND WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, current law and regulations allow for additional compensation for veterans who have a service-connected disability rating of 30% or more for their dependents; and

WHEREAS, it is the veteran's responsibility to inform the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) of changes in dependency; and

WHEREAS, veterans are often confused by the different sections of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and report changes to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and/or through the Department of Defense's Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS); and

WHEREAS, VBA will establish an overpayment due to dependency changes that were not directly reported to VBA regardless of whether VHA and/or DEERS reflected the changes; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to formally direct the VA Secretary to accept any reports

of dependency changes made to the VHA and/or documented in DEERS to mitigate any alleged overpayment due to changes in dependency status; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to formally direct the VA Secretary to establish a method to accept and incorporate DEERS changes automatically into the VBA process and to allow VHA changes to dependency to be reported to VBA.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 70
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO OPPOSE THE PAYMENT OF
ATTORNEY FEES BASED ON PERIODS WHEN THE ATTORNEY
WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE CLAIM

WHEREAS, revisions in the law and regulations governing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have allowed for private agents and attorneys to charge for their representation of claimants before the VA; and

WHEREAS, those regulations, section 14.636(e), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, contain some indications that there may be provision for limitation of the final payment awarded to the private agents and attorneys based on reasonable limitations, as noted in the written description of Fees Permitted:

Fees permitted for services of an agent or attorney admitted to practice before VA must be reasonable. They may be based on a fixed fee, hourly rate, a percentage of benefits recovered, or a combination of such bases. Factors considered in determining whether fees are reasonable include:

1. The extent and type of services the representative performed;
2. The complexity of the case;
3. The level of skill and competence required of the representative in giving the services;
4. The amount of time the representative spent on the case;
5. The results the representative achieved, including the amount of any benefits recovered;
6. The level of review to which the claim was taken and the level of the review at which the representative was retained;
7. Rates charged by other representatives for similar services; and
8. Whether, and to what extent, the payment of fees is contingent upon the results achieved; and

WHEREAS, the VA rarely, if ever, restricts the amount of fee paid to the private agents and attorneys beyond restricting the amount to 20% of any retroactive amount payable; and

WHEREAS, many private agents and attorneys act in the role of representative in a particular case for only a matter of months, providing limited interaction on behalf of the claimant and not demonstrating any knowledge of the case; and

WHEREAS, regardless of whether the private agent and/or attorney did any actual work that resulted in the eventual grant of benefits, the claimant is required to pay the 20% fee; and

WHEREAS, this frequently results in a windfall payment to the private agent and/or attorney at the immediate and direct expense of the claimant; and

WHEREAS, some private agents and/or attorneys, once they have engaged the signature of the client on the representation agreement, have prematurely disengaged as the representative without waiving their right of recovery for any future award; and

WHEREAS, that future award is often years later resulting in an ever-expanding amount of retroactive pay; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to restrict the amount of payment to a private agent and/or attorney to a reasonable analysis of the actual work put into the case, and in no case should the payment extend beyond the date when either the claimant or the private agent and/or attorney ends the representation, and withdrawal by the private agent and/or attorney should result in a loss of all rights to recovery where they, for whatever reason, have opted to break the client-representative relationship.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 71
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXPAND THE RECOGNIZED WARTIME SERVICE PERIODS TO INCLUDE THOSE VETERANS WHO SERVED IN COMBAT ENVIRONMENTS FROM HOSTILE MILITARY OR TERRORIST ACTIVITY FROM NOVEMBER 4, 1979 THROUGH AUGUST 1, 1990

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes specific periods of time as being wartime periods; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnam era ended on May 7, 1975 and the Persian Gulf War era began on August 2, 1990 section 3.2(f) and (i), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of United States service members were subjected to combat environments from hostile military or terrorist activity beginning on:

- November 4, 1979, with the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the subsequent ill-fated rescue mission, Operation Eagle Claw;
- May 1981 terrorist threats from and resulting combat action with Libya;
- April 18, 1983, bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut;
- October 23, 1983, bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut;
- October 25, 1983, invasion of Grenada;
- December 12, 1983, bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait;
- September 20, 1984, bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex northeast of Beirut;
- April 5, 1986, bombing of La Belle, a discotheque in West Berlin known to be popular with off-duty U.S. service members;
- Resulting Operation El Dorado Canyon on April 15, 1986, which involved 200 U.S. aircraft bombing Libya;
- 1989 buildup of U.S. troops in Panama with increasing tensions and hostilities leading to the December 20, 1989, invasion of Panama by U.S. troops in Operation Just Cause;
- January 1, 1981 to February 1, 1992, Honduras Operations;
- Unknown number of anti-terrorist activities that remain classified to this day; and

WHEREAS, any of the military participants of any of these combat environments from hostile military or terrorist activity who were wounded, physically or mentally, are entitled to service- connected compensation from the VA; they are otherwise not entitled to pension; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a new wartime period covering the time frame of November 4, 1979, until February 1, 1992, plausibly identified as various global locations –where U.S. service members endured hostile enemy and terrorist activity, to be eligible to obtain VA benefits and health care.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 072
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO CLARIFY AND EXPAND ENTITLEMENT TO DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER CHAPTER 35 FOR CHILDREN OF A TWO-VETERAN HOUSEHOLD

WHEREAS, current law and regulations allow for the child of a veteran permanently and totally (P&T) disabled due to service-connected conditions to receive Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) under chapter 35; and

WHEREAS, upon establishing DEA benefits, the veteran is no longer allowed to claim that adult child attending school as a dependent on their compensation claim; and

WHEREAS, this limitation is carried forward to both veteran parents despite the child received chapter 35 benefits only under the P&T parent's entitlement; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to clarify and expand the law and regulations to allow for continued dependency claim for the veteran parent who is not the P&T party upon which DEA benefits are being claimed.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 73
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ENSURE ENTITLEMENTS TO
SPINA BIFIDA AND BIRTH DEFECTS RELATED TO
AGENTORANGE IN NEW LOCATIONS OF THE PACT ACT

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regulations currently recognize and compensate birth defects in children of certain herbicide-exposed veterans, as shown at sections 3.814 (spina bifida) and 3.815 (birth defects), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); and

WHEREAS, these regulations are limited to veterans who served in Vietnam and certain parts of Korea; and

WHEREAS, many studies performed throughout the past 30 years have shown an expanded list of medical conditions have been linked to herbicide exposure, passed down to biological children conceived after herbicide exposure in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, on August 10, 2022, the President signed into law the PACT Act extensively expanding the areas conceded to have resulted in herbicide exposure; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 5–8, 2023, supports expanding the provisions of 38 CFR §§ 3.814 and 3.815 to include all herbicide exposure areas and times now conceded in the PACT Act; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to enact legislation requiring that medical diagnoses shown to be more probable (50% or more likely) due to agent orange exposure, beyond spina bifida be covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs for biological children of Vietnam veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 74
SUPPORT LEGISLATION REQUIRING ANY APPEAL
WITHDRAWAL TO BE IN WRITING

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regulations previously allowed for a withdrawal of an appeal if certain criteria were met, and such withdrawal was in writing; and

WHEREAS, changes to the regulations when the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act was set in place dropped the requirement for the withdrawal to be in writing; and

WHEREAS, often when a client is communicating with a VA employee via telephone to express a desire to withdraw a request for a hearing, the documentation of the call is left ambiguous as to whether it was just the hearing or the entire appeal being withdrawn; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the requirement that any appeal withdrawal be made in writing by the appellant or their authorized representative.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 78
SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE
CONNECTION FOR ADDITIONAL DISEASES RELATED
TO CONTAMINATED WATER AT CAMP LEJEUNE

WHEREAS, military personnel and their families were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, from August 1, 1953, to December 31, 1987; and

WHEREAS, the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 established 15 different conditions where the exposed military personnel and their families were eligible to seek treatment at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health facilities at no cost; and

WHEREAS, the conditions identified for cost-free health care were esophageal cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, leukemia, multiple myeloma, myelodysplastic syndromes, renal toxicity, hepatic steatosis, female infertility, miscarriage, scleroderma, neurobehavioral effects and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs established the presumptive list for service connection for diseases associated with said water supply exposure as of January 2017 and included only eight conditions: adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and Parkinson's disease; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary will continue to review relevant information to support the creation of additional presumptive conditions, as it becomes available; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 900,000 service members were potentially exposed to the tainted water; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to consider expanding the presumptive list to include all conditions set in the Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–154) that were not previously included.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 79
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ALLOW EXPANDED ENTITLEMENT TO
DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER CHAPTER 35 FOR
CHILDREN OF A TWO-VETERAN HOUSEHOLD WHERE BOTH PARENTS ARE
SHOWN WITH PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED STATUS DUE TO
SERVICE-CONNECTED CONDITIONS

WHEREAS, current law and regulations allow for the child of a permanently and totally (P&T) disabled veteran to receive Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA) under chapter 35; and

WHEREAS, each P&T veteran parent achieved such a rating based on their own personal military service and service-incurred disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not allow the child to receive chapter 35 benefits based on the separate entitlement of each P&T parent; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to require the VA to afford the child separate chapter 35 benefits under each P&T parent.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 81
SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR PAYMENT OF THE MAXIMUM
BURIAL ALLOWANCE FOR VETERANS WITH A TOTAL DISABILITY
RATING BASED ON INDIVIDUAL UNEMPLOYABILITY

WHEREAS, at present, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will pay the maximum burial allowance for the burial and funeral expenses of certain veterans when their death is attributable to a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, VA will presume, unless it has evidence to the contrary on the date it receives notice of the veteran’s death, that a veteran died as a result of a service-connected disability or disabilities if, at the date of death, the veteran was rated totally disabled for a service-connected disability or disabilities, excluding a total disability rating based on individual unemployment; and

WHEREAS, VA separately recognizes the presence of a total disability rating based on individual unemployment as sufficient to award death benefits for compensation purposes; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, proposes that legislative and regulatory changes be enacted to presume that a veteran died as a result of a service-connected disability or disabilities if, at the date of death, the veteran was rated totally disabled for a service-connected disability or disabilities to include a total disability rating based on individual unemployment.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 82
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ALLOW FOR ACCRUED BENEFITS TO
BE PAID IN FULL TO ANY SURVIVING FAMILY MEMBER

WHEREAS, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 3.1000(a) stipulates benefits owed to veteran at the time of death may be paid to a spouse, child, or dependent parent; and

WHEREAS, 38 C.F.R. § 3.1000(a)(5) states, in all other cases, only so much of the accrued benefit may be paid as may be necessary to reimburse the person who bore the expense of last sickness or burial;” and

WHEREAS, 38 C.F.R. § 3.816(f) stipulates the payment procedures for Payment of Benefits to Survivors of Estates of Deceased Beneficiaries (under Nehmer); and

WHEREAS, under this rule, the VA is required to make payments of benefits owed a veteran prior their passing to a spouse, children (regardless of age), parent (regardless of dependency status), or the estate; and

WHEREAS, 38 C.F.R. § 3.816(f) does not limit the payment of benefits owed to the estate only in the amount "necessary to reimburse the person who bore the expense of last sickness or burial," and WHEREAS, the benefits owed to a living veteran are not limited to an amount "to reimburse the person who bore the expense of last sickness or burial," and as such there should be no limit to the amount payable to the estate upon the veteran's death; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation and policy changes to amend 38 C.F.R. § 3.1000(a)(5) to allow for the full payment of all benefits owed to the veteran at the time of their passing to their estate; AND

BE IF FURTHER RESOLVED that the money owed to a veteran at the time of their passing should never be limited to an amount "to reimburse the person who bore the expense of last sickness or burial," and all regulations concerning payment of accrued benefits should be amended to reflect this change.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 83

SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HOME LOAN GUARANTY PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) helps veterans, service members, and eligible surviving spouses become homeowners; and

WHEREAS, VA provides a home loan guaranty benefit and other housing-related programs to help buy, build, repair, retain or adapt a home for personal occupancy; and

WHEREAS, the VA home loan benefit includes no down payment requirement, competitively low interest rates, limited closing costs, no need for private mortgage insurance (PMI) and this is a lifetime benefit that can be used multiple times; and

WHEREAS, VA has now backed more than 25 million home loans since the program's inception in 1944; and

WHEREAS, VA advocates for veterans by limiting fees that lenders can charge and monitoring for unscrupulous lending practices; and

WHEREAS, recent events have caused nearly 40,000 veterans and their families to possibly lose their homes to foreclosure due to unforeseen circumstances; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to consider modernizing and improving the VA home loan process to improve veterans access to home ownership for them and their families.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 87

SUPPORT LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO AWARD A 10% DISABILITY RATING FOR VETERANS THAT ARE PRESCRIBED MEDICATION TO CONTROL HYPERTENSION

WHEREAS, to receive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for hypertension, the condition must be service related with moderate elevation in blood pressure readings and require continuous medication to control blood pressure; and

WHEREAS, a veteran's medical records must show a diagnosis of hypertension and blood pressure measurements on three different days with an elevated diastolic blood pressure reading of 100 mm or greater; and

WHEREAS, the VA rating must be at least 10% to qualify for VA disability payments; and

WHEREAS, most veterans diagnosed with hypertension are put on medication to control the condition and lower the blood pressure measurements, thereby disqualifying them for a compensable VA rating; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to automatically grant veterans diagnosed with hypertension and prescribed medication a 10% disability rating.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 108
INCREASE THE GRANT AND SPECIALLY ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT
REIMBURSEMENT RATES FOR AUTOMOBILES AND OTHER CONVEYANCES
TO CERTAIN DISABLED VETERANS, AND AUTHORIZE REIMBURSEMENT FOR
NEW ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT TECHNOLOGIES

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides grants to assist eligible disabled veterans and military service members in purchasing specially equipped automobiles or other conveyances; and

WHEREAS, when originally established, the grant was set at an amount sufficient to cover the average retail cost of automobiles; and

WHEREAS, later adjustments elevated grants to amounts representing 80% of the average cost of automobiles; and

WHEREAS, the amount of the automobile allowance has not been further adjusted concurrent with increases in costs of automobiles, resulting in substantial erosion of the value of the benefit due to inflation; and

WHEREAS, the current grant level constitutes about 66% of the total average retail price of automobiles; and

WHEREAS, the VA also provides reimbursement for special adaptive equipment, but the rates of reimbursement have not kept pace with present-day costs to repair or replace such equipment; and

WHEREAS, advances in new automobile technologies, such as collision warning systems, electronic stability control, backup cameras and GPS, would enable disabled veterans to more safely operate vehicles; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to increase the automobile grant level to an amount representing 80% of the average cost of new automobiles; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation and policies that would increase the rates of reimbursement for repairs and replacement of specially adaptive equipment for automobiles and other conveyances consistent with present-day costs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on Congress and the VA to support legislation and policies that would expand the items approved for reimbursement, such as collision warning systems, electronic stability control, backup cameras, GPS and other available safety technologies.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 109
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE THE DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FIDUCIARY PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fiduciary Program was established to protect veterans and other beneficiaries who, due to injury, disease, or age, are unable to manage their own financial affairs; and

WHEREAS, a VA payee, referred to by the VA as a VA fiduciary, is a paid position held by an individual or organization appointed to manage a veteran's VA benefit payments when a veteran is deemed to be financially incompetent by a court or by the VA; and

WHEREAS, the VA Fiduciary Program has been rife with fraud stemming from fiduciaries funneling money and assets from vulnerable veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) found that the Eastern Area Fiduciary Hub (EAFH), located in Indianapolis, did not properly investigate most complaints against fiduciaries, and of the 12 determinations that were made by EAFH, almost \$1 million had been stolen from veterans, which means that the total dollar amount of misuse and potential fraud was likely well over \$1 million had the VA properly investigated the matter—other OIG investigations have uncovered millions more missing from veteran accounts in other hubs; and

WHEREAS, part of the problem is a lack of oversight; some of the VA-appointed fiduciaries have criminal records, but were still approved; and

WHEREAS, OIG investigations also found that the required audits of the fiduciaries were not being done by the VA, and this allowed the thefts to continue for years; and

WHEREAS, in some cases the VA doesn't tell the veteran that they appointed a fiduciary and emptied the bank accounts of the veteran; and

WHEREAS, in some cases, VA employees (unlawfully) gave VA fiduciaries permission to sell the veteran's home and unlawfully took the Social Security payments of the veteran's spouse gave those to the VA fiduciary; and

WHEREAS, in some cases the veteran called the VA to report the financial abuse but was denied help by VA employees, because the vulnerable veteran could not provide "proof" of the abuse; and

WHEREAS, formal complaints filed with the VA OIG about VA Fiduciary Program employees (i.e., field examiners and designated fraud investigators) are being denied because the VA OIG no longer investigates complaints filed against the VA Fiduciary Program; rather, veterans are being redirected to the applicable fiduciary hub suspected of malfeasance so the VA Fiduciary Program at that fiduciary hub can investigate itself for malfeasance; and

WHEREAS, vulnerable veterans are being wronged by both malfeasance of the VA fiduciary and the institutional incompetence of the VA Fiduciary Program; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation and changes to applicable regulations that require the VA to improve the VA Fiduciary Program by creating a better monitoring system; a timely dispute resolution system when beneficiaries make complaints; initiate investigations based on suspected reports of fiduciary fraud rather than putting the burden of proof on the vulnerable veteran; and make an outside agency, such as VA OIG, responsible for investigating complaints of VA employees who work in the VA Fiduciary Program and fiduciary hubs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 113
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE STUDIES, HEALTH CARE AND
BENEFITS RESULTING FROM TOXIC EXPOSURES AT BOSNIA AND KOSOVO.

WHEREAS, beginning in December 1995, U.S. and allied nations deployed peacekeeping forces to Bosnia and Kosovo in support of Operation Joint Endeavor as part of the United Nations (U.N.) mission; and

WHEREAS, the U.N. mission completed its mandate on December 31, 2002; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense acknowledged that burn pits were used at U.S. bases in Bosnia and Kosovo; and

WHEREAS, during Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia in 1995–1996, military preventive- medicine personnel recognized that open burning of waste might be an operational necessity during combat operations, but they emphasized that burning should be used to the minimum extent feasible and that burn pits should be located as far as possible downwind of personnel; and

WHEREAS, researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Epidemiology Program, Post Deployment Health Services, studied the cause-specific mortality risks among veterans who deployed to Bosnia and Kosovo between 1996 and 2002; and

WHEREAS, this study focused on mortality due to leukemia, respiratory disease, respiratory cancer and heart disease; and

WHEREAS, media reports of leukemia and other cancers among European U.N. peacekeepers who served in the Balkans, and a scientific finding of excess Hodgkin's lymphoma among Italian U.N. peacekeepers who served in Bosnia, suggested a link between cancer incidence and depleted uranium exposure; and

WHEREAS, veterans may not know for years or decades about the toxic or environmental conditions they were exposed to during military service; and

WHEREAS, the VA does not recognize or acknowledge burn pit exposure for those who served in Bosnia or Kosovo; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the recognition of the existence of toxic substances and environmental hazards in Bosnia and Kosovo, and concession of exposure by all U.S. service members who served there between 1995 and 2002; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to grant Bosnia and Kosovo veterans eligibility to VA health care, to include hospital care, medical services and nursing home care, by expanding the definition of toxic exposures in section 1710, title 38, United States Code; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports studies to identify illnesses and diseases that have a positive association, including a sufficient, limited or suggestive association, with exposure to any toxic substances or high levels of particulate matter and dust resulting from open burn pits in Bosnia and Kosovo.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 114
SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT WOULD EXEMPT THE BENEFITS PAID TO
WARTIME SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS FROM THE “PAYGO/
CUTGO” PROVISIONS OF THE BUDGET ENFORCEMENT ACT

WHEREAS, wartime-disabled veterans have earned the benefits and services they, their dependents and survivors receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a result of the injuries sustained during wartime service; and

WHEREAS, the benefits and services received by wartime-disabled veterans as a result of their service-connected disabilities are an extension of the costs of war; and

WHEREAS, this country has a moral obligation to continue to care for these citizen-soldiers who have risen in defense and support of the ideals of this great nation and who have returned to civilian life with service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the benefits and services provided to America’s veterans, dependents and survivors have not caused this nation’s deficit problems; and

WHEREAS, the so-called “PAYGO/CUTGO” provisions of the Budget Enforcement Act require any new benefits or services to be paid out of existing benefits or programs, in effect requiring one group of disabled veterans to give up a benefit or service so that another worthy group of wartime disabled veterans can receive benefits or services to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, the adoption of budget caps and sequestration have often limited the ability of congressional appropriations committees to fully fund all veterans programs, services and benefits; and

WHEREAS, veterans suffering from ailments associated with their service in the military are compensated from funds generated by cutting the benefits of other service-connected veterans and their survivors; and

WHEREAS, the benefits and services provided to wartime-disabled veterans are unique and not a gratuitous benefit; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to exempt VA benefits and services provided to service-connected disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors from the PAYGO/CUTGO provisions of the Budget Enforcement Act, as well as from any budget caps or sequestration legislation.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 115
AMEND PROVISIONS REGARDING ELIGIBILITY FOR AUTOMOBILE ADAPTIVE
EQUIPMENT TO INCLUDE ANY VETERAN WHOSE SERVICE-CONNECTED
DISABILITY INHIBITS THE ABILITY TO SAFELY OPERATE A MOTOR VEHICLE

WHEREAS, section 3902, title 38, United States Code (USC), and section 17.119(a), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, restrict the eligibility for adaptive automobile equipment to those veterans who qualify for the automobile grant as specified in section 3901, title 38, USC; and

WHEREAS, not all veterans whose service-connected disabilities prohibit the safe operation of a motor vehicle meet the requirements of section 3901, title 38, USC; and

WHEREAS, these service-connected disabled veterans should be provided the adaptive equipment necessary to safely operate a motor vehicle; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation that would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide or assist in providing the adaptive equipment deemed necessary to any veteran whose service-connected disability interferes with the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 116
OPPOSE ANY PROPOSAL THAT WOULD REDUCE
PAYMENTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY
COMPENSATION BY PAYMENTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY
INSURANCE, SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE OR
ANY OTHER FEDERAL BENEFIT PAID TO A VETERAN

WHEREAS, consideration has been given to offsetting Social Security Insurance (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits from any other federal benefit; and

WHEREAS, the adoption of such a measure would reduce the overall income provided to veterans who have a compensable service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, such an offset creates undue hardship on totally disabled service-connected veterans and their families by drastically reducing their total income; and

WHEREAS, benefits received from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or under military retirement pay and other federal programs have differing eligibility criteria compared to eligibility for SSI or SSDI benefits; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any measure that proposes to offset the payment of any other federal benefit or earned benefit entitlement from VA compensation payments made to service-connected disabled veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 117
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ALLOW ALL VETERANS TO
RECOVER TAXES ON DISABILITY SEVERANCE PAY

WHEREAS, certain funds received by military service members determined to be unfit for duty as a result of personal injury or disability are not taxable; and

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) continues to tax military disability severance pay as regular income; and

WHEREAS, a United States District Court held that such military disability severance pay is nontaxable income; and

WHEREAS, the IRS has subsequently acquiesced to the District Court holding; and WHEREAS, a three-year statute of limitation prevents individuals who have been discharged for more than three years from recovering the taxed funds taken by the IRS; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, strongly supports legislation that would allow all veterans to recover taxes from their disability severance pay.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 118
SUPPORT OVERSIGHT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS PRACTICES IN EVALUATING DISABILITY CLAIMS
FOR RESIDUALS OF MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

WHEREAS, DAV maintains a long-standing resolution from our membership that advocates an open process to govern establishment of service connection for diseases and injuries incurred in or aggravated during military service; and

WHEREAS, establishing a causal relationship between certain injuries and later disability can be daunting due to lack of records or human factors that obscure or prevent documentation or even basic investigation of such incidents after they occur; and

WHEREAS, military sexual trauma is ever more recognized as a hazard of service for 1% of men serving and 20% of women serving in the armed forces and later represents a heavy burden of psychological and mental health care for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, an absence of documentation of military sexual trauma in the personnel or military unit records of injured individuals prevents or obstructs adjudication of claims for disabilities of this deserving group injured during their service, and may interrupt or prevent their care by the VA once they become veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) has established an office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPRO) to establish departmentwide policies and procedures for the handling of sexual assault and injury cases for active military service members and members of Reserve and Guard units, including documentation, records retention and protection of the privacy of the individuals involved in such cases; and

WHEREAS, both the DOD and VA have agreed on some procedures that would govern documentation sufficient to justify service connection of sexual assault and other military sexual trauma; and

WHEREAS, the VA has issued a regulation (section 3.304(f)(5), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations) that provides for a liberalization of requirements for establishment of service connection due to personal assault, including military sexual trauma, even when documentation of an “actual

stressor” is not found, but when evidence in other records exists of a “marker” indicating that a stressor may have in fact occurred; and

WHEREAS, the VA has trained adjudication personnel, especially its rating staffs in VA regional offices, in better evaluating disability claims for military sexual assaults and has emphasized these particular claims must be made subject to special attention in consonance with the new regulation; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the VA's practices in evaluating disability claims associated with military sexual trauma, and urges the VA to conduct rigorous oversight of adjudication personnel and review of data to ensure the present policy is being faithfully followed and standardized in all VA regional offices.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 120

OPPOSE LUMP-SUM PAYMENTS FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, disability compensation is paid monthly to an eligible veteran on account of and at a rate commensurate with diminished earning capacity resulting from the effects of service- connected disease or injury; and

WHEREAS, such compensation, by design, continues to provide relief from the service-connected disability for as long as the veteran continues to suffer its effects at a compensable level; and

WHEREAS, by law, the rate of compensation is determined by the level of disability present, thereby requiring reevaluation of the disability upon a change in its degree; and

WHEREAS, various entities have suggested lump-sum payments as a way for the government to avoid the administrative costs of reevaluating service-connected disabilities and as a way to avoid future liabilities to service-connected disabled veterans when their disabilities worsen or cause secondary disabilities; and

WHEREAS, such lump-sum payments would not, on the whole, be in the best interests of disabled veterans but would be more intended for government savings and convenience; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any change in law to provide for lump-sum payments of Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 121

OPPOSE THE IMPOSITION OF TIME LIMITS FOR FILING COMPENSATION CLAIMS

WHEREAS, some veterans suffer lifelong impairments from disabilities incurred in connection with military service; and

WHEREAS, disability compensation is a benefit available to veterans at any time they choose to claim it; and

WHEREAS, veterans who, for whatever reason, do not initially desire to claim and receive compensation should not forfeit the right to claim and receive it at some later time; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans' Claims Adjudication Commission, created by Congress to study the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims processing system, suggested a time limit for filing compensation claims as a way to reduce the VA's workload; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any change in law to limit the time for filing compensation claims.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 122

OPPOSE ANY CHANGE THAT WOULD REDEFINE SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY OR RESTRICT THE CONDITIONS OR CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT MAY BE ESTABLISHED

WHEREAS, current law authorizes service connection for disabilities incurred or aggravated during service in the United States armed forces in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS, various proposals have been made to limit service connection to disabilities caused directly by the performance of duty; and

WHEREAS, disability incurred in the line of duty is sometimes not directly due to a job injury but may be due to less obvious factors attributable to the armed forces environment; and

WHEREAS, proof of a causal relationship may often be difficult or impossible notwithstanding an inability to dissociate the disability from service-related factors; and

WHEREAS, current law equitably alleviates the onerous burden of establishing performance of duty or other causal connection as a prerequisite for service connection; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes changes in current law so as to redefine and restrict the conditions under which service connection may be established.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 123
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE
CONNECTION FOR DISEASES AND ILLNESSES RELATED
TO CONTAMINANTS AT FORT MCCLELLAN, ALABAMA

WHEREAS, after World War II until the base closed in 1999, Fort McClellan, located in Anniston, Alabama, was home of the Chemical Corps and Chemical Weapons school for the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, Fort McClellan conducted Operation Top Hat, which used military personnel to test exposure and decontamination methods that included sulfur mustard and nerve agents; and

WHEREAS, in 1962, Fort McClellan added the Biological Radiological Agency, Aberdeen Proving Grounds; and

WHEREAS, the Monsanto Chemical Plant, located in Anniston, was instrumental in the development and testing of the herbicides used during Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, Monsanto Chemical settled a class action lawsuit with more than 200,000 residents of Anniston for more than \$700 million; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report, Contaminants in the Subsurface: Source Zone Assessment and Remediation, shows that there were 67 different disposal sites on Fort McClellan containing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) trichloroethylene (TCE), polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), semi-volatile organic compound (SVOC), pesticides, explosives, heavy metals (Pb), unexploded ordnance (UXO), radioactive sources and non-stockpile chemical materials; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report recognizes that both the groundwater and soil were contaminated by those noted above; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has recognized the potential exposures at Fort McClellan, noting in part:

Some members of the U.S. Army Chemical Corp School, Army Combat Development Command Chemical/Biological/Radiological Agency, Army Military Police School and Women's Army Corps, among others, may have been exposed to one or more of several hazardous materials, likely at low levels, during their service at Fort McClellan. Potential exposures could have included, but are not limited to, the following:

- Radioactive compounds (cesium-137 and cobalt-60) used in decontamination training activities in isolated locations on base.
 - Chemical warfare agents (mustard gas and nerve agents) used in decontamination testing activities in isolated locations on base.
 - Airborne polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the Monsanto plant in the neighboring town;
- NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls upon Congress to immediately introduce legislation to authorize scientific studies of the environmental and toxic exposures at Fort McClellan; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to establish a concession of exposure to toxins and legislation to establish presumptive service connection for the veterans who were exposed on Fort McClellan.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 124
AMEND THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SCHEDULE
FOR RATING DISABILITIES FOR MENTAL DISORDERS

WHEREAS, under section 4.130, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, the criteria for evaluating mental disorders is ambiguous; and

WHEREAS, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, delirium, dementia, and amnesic and other cognitive disorders, anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, somatoform disorders, mood

disorders and chronic adjustment disorders are all evaluated using the same general rating formula for mental disorders; and

WHEREAS, the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders specifically lists different symptoms for post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and other psychiatric disorders; and

WHEREAS, one veteran service-connected for schizophrenia and another veteran service-connected for another psychiatric disorder should not be evaluated using the same general formula; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports amendment of section 4.130, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, to formulate different criteria to evaluate the various mental disorders under the appropriate standards applicable to each diagnosis.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 127

INCREASE THE HOME IMPROVEMENT AND STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS GRANT

WHEREAS, under section 1717, title 38, United States Code, the Home Improvement and Structural Alterations (HISA) program, veterans with service-connected disabilities or veterans with nonservice-connected disabilities may receive assistance for any home improvement necessary for the continuation of treatment or for disability access to the home and essential lavatory and sanitary facilities; and

WHEREAS, a HISA grant is available to veterans who have received a medical determination indicating that improvements and structural alterations are necessary or appropriate for the effective and economical treatment of the veteran; and

WHEREAS, a veteran may receive both a HISA grant and either a Special Home Adaptation grant or a Specially Adapted Housing grant; and

WHEREAS, the HISA improvement benefit provides up to \$6,800 to service-connected veterans, and up to \$2,000 to nonservice-connected veterans as a result of the Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls for a reasonable increase in HISA benefits for veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 129

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO STREAMLINE AND IMPROVE THE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESSING OF SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING GRANTS AND THE SPECIAL HOUSING ADAPTATION GRANTS

WHEREAS, the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant and the Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grant have eligibility requirements, benefits and limitations that are very specific and distinct from each other, which can cause confusion among veterans and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adjudicators; and

WHEREAS, once eligibility has been established by the VA, the remaining grant processes have numerous requirements, which can be cumbersome and lengthy, that include feasibility studies, minimum property requirements, and the veteran finding three separate contractors to solicit bids and then approval by the VA, all of this even before construction begins; and

WHEREAS, while the required SAH modifications must be compliant with both local municipalities' building codes and the VA's own code, there must be a balanced focus on the immediate needs of the veteran; and

WHEREAS, contractors often decline to participate in these projects, as the VA has not completely digitized its payment processes, thus contractors may wait months before payment, all while increasing the processing time; and

WHEREAS, these often lengthy processes become of great concern for veterans with severely restricting disabilities or terminal illnesses, as veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and other terminal illnesses often do not survive long enough to benefit from the improvements that an SAH grant could afford them; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to streamline the SAH and SHA eligibility requirements, improve the length of processing time, digitize VA payments, and expedite all applicants with ALS and other terminal illnesses.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 130

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ENSURE THAT TOTAL DISABILITY BASED ON INDIVIDUAL UNEMPLOYABILITY REMAINS AVAILABLE FOR ALL VETERANS REGARDLESS OF AGE OR RECEIPT OF ANY OTHER EARNED FEDERAL BENEFITS

WHEREAS, when a veteran's disability is rated less than a total 100% evaluation, but they are unable to obtain or maintain substantial gainful employment, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regulations allow the veteran to apply for Total Disability Based on Individual Unemployability (TDIU); and

WHEREAS, TDIU is based on the severity of the individual veteran's unique disability picture and its impact on the veteran's ability to obtain and maintain substantial gainful employment; generally, the veteran must have a single disability rated at 60% or a combined evaluation of 70% to be eligible for TDIU; and

WHEREAS, reports published by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in November 2013, August 2014 and December 2016, as well as the Government Accounting Office (GAO) report in June 2015, made recommendations to limit TDIU based on age and entitlement to additional earned federal benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Administration's proposed 2018 budget contained a proposal to terminate IU ratings for veterans at age of 62 and cut off TDIU benefits for any veteran already in receipt of Social Security retirement benefits; and

WHEREAS, the December 2018 CBO report contained a proposal to terminate IU ratings for veterans at the age of 65 and cut off TDIU benefits for any veteran already in receipt of Social Security retirement benefits; and

WHEREAS, VA regulation section 4.19, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, states the VA is precluded from considering the veteran's age in their determination of a TDIU; and

WHEREAS, TDIU is not a retirement or pension program and is neither similar nor related to Social Security retirement benefits; and

WHEREAS, a VA determination of a TDIU is not the same nor is it similar to federal unemployment insurance; it is a disability compensation benefit; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to enact legislation to protect TDIU for it to remain available for all veterans regardless of age or receipt of any other earned federal benefits.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 142

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REDUCE THE 10-YEAR RULE FOR DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, section 1318 (b)(1), title 38, United States Code, provides Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits for survivors of deceased veterans who were rated totally disabled for 10 or more years; and

WHEREAS, the financial status of the surviving spouse is compromised due to the care required by the totally disabled veteran and provided by the caregiver spouse; and

WHEREAS, the veteran's spouse, acting as a caregiver, must in many cases limit, give up or put careers and other activities on hold; and

WHEREAS, it is inherently unfair that the spouse should carry this additional burden for 10 years or more before qualifying for DIC; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to reduce the 10-year rule for DIC qualification to a more reasonable period of time.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 143

SUPPORT INTEREST PAYMENTS FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RETROACTIVE AWARDS OF ONE YEAR OR MORE

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claimants are often denied timely receipt of their rightfully earned benefits due to prolonged bureaucratic delay in the VA adjudication process and/or through clear and unmistakable error on the part of VA rating board authorities; and

WHEREAS, under current law and regulation, VA claimants who incur indebtedness to the United States government, in addition to the principal amount of such indebtedness, are assessed and must pay interest charges; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, Congress enacted the Prompt Payment Act, Public Law 97-177, to require federal agencies to pay their bills to outside vendors on a timely basis or pay interest penalties to the outside vendors when payments are made late; and

WHEREAS, VA claimants who are denied timely receipt of their rightfully earned benefits do not receive interest payments from the government and therefore incur a loss of income, which could have been avoided had they received their earned benefits in a timely fashion; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, seeks the enactment of legislation that would require the VA to pay interest on all retroactive benefit awards in excess of one year after these claims are filed.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 144
EXPAND PRESUMPTIONS FOR SERVICE CONNECTION
FOR FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR

WHEREAS, former prisoners of war (POWs) suffered cruel and inhumane treatment, together with nutritional deprivation at the hands of their captors, which resulted in long-term adverse health effects; and

WHEREAS, POWs were subjected to numerous and varying forms of abuse dependent upon the place, time and circumstance of their captivity by the enemy; and

WHEREAS, for this reason, former POWs suffer from a wide range of physical and psychological maladies; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, supports legislation which would add those medical conditions that are characteristically associated with or can be reasonably attributed to the POW experience as presumptive disorders for former POWs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 145
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE A TEMPORARY TOTAL DISABILITY
COMPENSATION RATING FOR AN AMPUTEE VETERAN WHILE A NEW
PROSTHETIC DEVICE IS DEVELOPED AND DELIVERED

WHEREAS, four to six weeks are required to manufacture a prosthetic device; and

WHEREAS, the veteran amputee without an artificial limb can be incapacitated and unable to obtain or retain gainful employment; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD) does not contain any provision for temporary total disability rating for a service-disabled veteran amputee during the period of waiting for delivery of a new prosthetic limb; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, supports legislation to amend the VASRD to provide a temporary total rating for a service-connected veteran amputee during the period required to replace a prosthetic device.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 147
SUPPORT LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING THE PRESUMPTION OF
SERVICE CONNECTION FOR ALL RADIOGENIC DISEASES AND
ELIMINATE DOSE ESTIMATE REQUIREMENTS

WHEREAS, members of the United States armed forces participated in test detonations of nuclear devices; served in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, Japan, following the detonation of nuclear weapons, including "cleanup" operations at test sites; and have conducted other activities exposing them to ionizing radiation; and

WHEREAS, the United States government knew or should have known the potential harm to the health and well-being of these service members but did not consistently keep adequate records on radiation exposure; and

WHEREAS, those described as "atomic veterans" served our nation with honor, courage and devotion to duty; and

WHEREAS, remedial legislation passed by Congress in 1984 has not been effective in ensuring that all atomic veterans are compensated for their radiogenic diseases; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has indicated only about 50 claimants have been awarded disability compensation and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation pursuant to Public Law 98-542, the Veterans' Dioxin and Radiation Exposure Compensation Standards Act; and

WHEREAS, section 3.311, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations requires dose estimate exposure levels for claims based on radiation and is a higher standard than for other disabilities associated with exposure, such as claims based on herbicide exposure during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, the government has spent tens of millions of dollars to provide dose reconstruction estimates that do not accurately reflect actual radiation dose exposure of these veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, calls on Congress to enact legislation to provide presumptive service connection to atomic veterans for all recognized radiogenic diseases; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any veteran involved in cleanup operations following a detonation of a nuclear device hereinafter be considered an atomic veteran for purposes of eligibility for benefits and services provided by the VA; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on Congress to support the elimination of dose exposure estimates required for diseases presumptive to ionizing radiation exposure and presume exposure to ionizing radiation for any radiation-exposed veteran with proof of radiation risk activities, to include atmospheric and underwater detonations.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 148
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO AWARD SPECIAL MONTHLY
COMPENSATION AT R(1) TO VETERANS WITH ANATOMICAL
LOSS OR LOSS OF USE OF THREE EXTREMITIES

WHEREAS, veterans with anatomical loss or loss of use, or a combination of anatomical loss and loss of use, of three extremities are significantly impaired in their ability to conduct activities of daily living; and

WHEREAS, veterans with loss or loss of use of three extremities require the assistance of others for the ability to dress and undress themselves, or to keep themselves clean and presentable, or to perform frequent adjustment of special prosthetic or orthopedic appliances, or to attend to bowel and bladder self-care, or to protect themselves from hazards or dangers incident to their daily environment; and

WHEREAS, these factors are considered basic criteria for determining the need for regular aid and attendance by the Department of Veterans Affairs; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, supports legislation to award special monthly compensation under the provisions of section 1114(r)(1), title 38, United States Code, to veterans with anatomical loss or loss of use of three extremities.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 149
EXTEND ELIGIBILITY FOR VETERANS' MORTGAGE
PROTECTION LIFE INSURANCE TO SERVICE-CONNECTED
VETERANS RATED PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED

WHEREAS, Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) is presently available to veterans entitled to the specially adapted housing award under section 2101(a), title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, service-connected veterans rated as permanently and totally disabled cannot obtain mortgage life insurance through commercial insurance companies; and

WHEREAS, their survivors and dependents must bear an undue hardship upon the death of such veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VMLI program provides mortgage life insurance to severely disabled veterans and service members who have also received a specially adapted housing grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, seeks the enactment of legislation which would extend VMLI to service-connected veterans who are rated as permanently and totally disabled.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 150
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO CAP ATTORNEYS' FEES FOR
BENEFITS COUNSELING AND CLAIMS SERVICES BEFORE
THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, our nation established veterans programs to repay or reward veterans for their extraordinary service and sacrifices on behalf of their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, in the spirit in which special benefits are provided to especially deserving beneficiaries, our citizens intended these benefits to be dispensed through an open, helpful and informal system, in which the government is duty bound to receive every claimant as entitled and provide every reasonable assistance in developing and shepherding the claim through the entire administrative process, while affording consideration of all legal avenues toward granting every benefit that can be supported in law; and

WHEREAS, the programs are also designed in a manner that ensures veterans and their families will receive the full measure of aid from disability compensation, and other payments without taxation, and with protections that ensure they are not diverted to others who have no entitlement to them; and

WHEREAS, Congress has set the rates of these modest benefits to be minimally adequate for their intended purposes, such as assisting disabled veterans and their families in purchasing the necessities of life or obtaining services necessary to ameliorate the effects of disability, and the amounts provided do not contemplate or allow for any reduction or diminishment in buying power such as will occur when a portion is diverted to attorneys; and

WHEREAS, acquiescence in any general situation in which obtaining veterans benefits required hiring an attorney and surrendering a portion of disability compensation or other benefits obtained to the attorney fundamentally contradicts and undermines the spirit of the benefit programs created solely to aid and meet the special needs of disabled veterans and their dependents and survivors; and

WHEREAS, it is inappropriate for Congress to disavow the government's obligation to ensure veterans receive the benefits due them by passing them off to the legal profession where their plight might well depend on or be determined by their potential for producing attorneys fees; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, Congress passed legislation, Public Law 109-461, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care and Information Technology Act of 2006, which allows attorneys to charge a veteran a fee for counseling and claims service following the filing of a Notice of Disagreement; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Appeals Modernization Act established three ways for a claimant to take action on a decision, a Supplemental Claim, a Higher Level Review or a Notice of Disagreement, and thus allowing attorneys or agents to charge a fee for counseling and representation following any of the three noted; and

WHEREAS, the initial intent of veterans benefits recognized that no disabled veteran should have to pay an attorney significant fees to obtain the benefits that a grateful nation provides and the veteran is rightfully due; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, seeks legislation to provide for a reasonable cap on the amount of fees an attorney can charge veterans for benefits counseling and claims services before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 151
SUPPORT AN INCREASE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS BURIAL ALLOWANCE FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS
AND PROVIDE AUTOMATIC ANNUAL ADJUSTMENTS

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery Administration burial allowance provides partial reimbursement for eligible funeral and burial costs, with a maximum payment of \$2,000 for service-connected burial allowance, \$300 for nonservice-connected burial allowance and \$749 for nonservice-connected plot allowance; and

WHEREAS, passage of Public Law 111-275, the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010, resulted in an increase in both plot allowance and burial allowance from \$300 to \$749 for nonservice-connected deaths in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities, effective October 1, 2011; and

WHEREAS, this law did not increase the \$2,000 for burial and funeral expenses for service-connected deaths outside of VA facilities, nor is it indexed to the Consumer Price Index for annual adjustments; and

WHEREAS, the plot allowance introduced in 1973 was an attempt to provide a plot benefit for veterans who did not have reasonable access to a national cemetery, but neither the plot allowance nor the burial allowance was intended to cover the full cost of a civilian burial in a private cemetery; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to increase the burial allowance payable in the case of death due to service-connected disability regardless of whether the death occurs in a VA facility and provide for automatic annual adjustments indexed to the rise in the cost of living.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 152
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE A REALISTIC INCREASE
IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMPENSATION
RATES TO ADDRESS LOSS OF QUALITY OF LIFE

WHEREAS, the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission (Commission) was established by Public Law 108–136, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004, to address several measures, one of which was loss of quality of life; and

WHEREAS, current law requires that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) rating schedule compensates service-disabled veterans for average impairment of earning capacity; and

WHEREAS, the Commission concluded early in its deliberations that VA disability compensation should recompense veterans not only for average impairments of earning capacity but also for their inability to participate in usual life activities and for the impact of their disabilities on quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine (now the National Academy of Medicine) reached the same conclusion; moreover, it made extensive recommendations on steps to develop and implement a methodology to evaluate the impact of disabilities on veterans' quality of life and to provide appropriate compensation; and

WHEREAS, the Commission concluded that the VA rating schedule should be revised to include compensation for the impact of service-connected disabilities on quality of life; and

WHEREAS, for some veterans, quality of life is addressed in a limited fashion by special monthly compensation for loss of limbs or loss of use of limbs; and

WHEREAS, the Commission urged Congress to consider increases in special monthly compensation awards to address the profound impact of certain disabilities on quality of life and to assess whether other ancillary benefits might be appropriate; and

WHEREAS, while a recommended systematic methodology is being developed for evaluating and compensating for the impact of disability on quality of life, the Commission recommended that an immediate interim increase of up to 25% of compensation rates be enacted; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to provide a realistic increase in VA compensation rates to address loss of quality of life.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 153
OPPOSE SUBJECTING DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY
AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO MEANS TESTING

WHEREAS, the citizens of our nation heretofore have honorably recognized their indebtedness to those who sacrificed in military service by providing disability compensation as restitution for injuries, illnesses or diseases suffered in such service; and

WHEREAS, a disabled veteran is rightfully entitled to compensation for the effects of service-connected disability, without regard to any good fortune or income of the veteran or spouse from sources independent of the government's obligations to the veteran; and

WHEREAS, it is unfair for the government to seek to disclaim its obligation to disabled veterans or their survivors merely because of the receipt of other, unrelated income; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the special status of disability compensation and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, efforts have been made to deploy a means test to reduce or eliminate them in cases in which the veteran, spouse or survivor has obtained other income; and

WHEREAS, degrading compensation by providing it to the extent of the veteran's or survivor's economic needs, rather than as a measure of restitution for personal injury or illness, thereby disassociates compensation from that which merits it and associates it with factors that govern purely gratuitous benefits; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any proposal to means test disability compensation and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 154

SUPPORT A CHANGE IN REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS RATING UNDER SECTION 4.30 OF TITLE 38, CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS TO PROVIDE FOR A TEMPORARY TOTAL RATING FOR INCAPACITATION OF MORE THAN 21 DAYS

WHEREAS, with advances in modern medicine and increasing emphasis on more efficient use of health care resources, health care providers are being encouraged to utilize suitable alternatives to inpatient care; and

WHEREAS, consequently, veterans are often treated through home health services or convalesce at home rather than in the hospital; and

WHEREAS, convalescent ratings are currently only authorized where inpatient or outpatient treatment resulted in surgery or immobilization of a major joint by cast; and

WHEREAS, there are instances where the veteran's treatment did not involve surgery or casting of a major joint, but the veteran has undergone healing, convalescence, or a therapeutic course in the home, with a duration of more than 21 days; and

WHEREAS, exacerbation of a service-connected disability sometimes makes work activities contraindicated for periods of more than 21 days; and

WHEREAS, in such instances, the therapeutic course, convalescence or restriction from work would occur in the home in lieu of hospitalization for more than 21 days; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a change in section 4.30, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, to provide for a temporary total rating if treatment or exacerbation of a service-connected disability results in a condition of temporary total incapacity for employment; or temporary unavailability for employment by reason of home health care or ambulatory care, bed rest or confinement to the home; or contraindication of work activities for more than 21 days.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 155

OPPOSE LONG-TERM ROUNDING DOWN OF COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS IN VETERANS' BENEFITS

WHEREAS, to maintain the worth of veterans benefits, they must be adjusted to keep pace with the rise in the cost of living; and

WHEREAS, long-term rounding down of adjusted rates to the next lower dollar amount erodes the value of these benefits over time and thus does not keep pace with the rise in the cost of living; and

WHEREAS, the rounding down of veterans' cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) unfairly targets disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors for cost savings to the government; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes long-term rounding down of COLAs for veterans' disability compensation and compensation to their dependents and survivors.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 156

AMEND THE LAW TO PROVIDE A 10-YEAR PROTECTION PERIOD FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY RATINGS

WHEREAS, section 110, title 38, United States Code, now provides for the protection of all disability compensation ratings that have been continuously in effect for 20 or more years; and

WHEREAS, permanency should be conceded for disability compensation ratings that have been continuously in effect for 10 years without change in evaluation with no further examination scheduled; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports amendment of section 110, title 38, United States Code, to provide that disability ratings in effect be permanently protected after a period of 10 continuous years.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 159
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE FOR REALISTIC
COST-OF-LIVING ALLOWANCES

WHEREAS, the Department of Labor provides statistical information and analysis that impacts the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for disabled veterans, military retirees and Social Security recipients; and

WHEREAS, the calculations regarding COLAs are the domain of the Social Security Administration, using a formula that has been directly linked to the Consumer Price Index since 1975, prescribed by law when calculating any COLA increase; and

WHEREAS, in general, a COLA is equal to the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) from the third quarter of one year to the third quarter of the next, and if there is no increase, there is no COLA; and

WHEREAS, the formula that derives the level of increase is tied to the United States economy on a very broad basis; stagnant economic activity does not mean disabled veterans' cost of living is flat; in fact, as they age and suffer from associated illnesses of aging, their costs increase; and

WHEREAS, it is unfair that disabled veterans are denied necessary increases in disability payments due to a formula that actually has little to do with the costs they bear; and

WHEREAS, there have been recent attempts to adjust the COLA downward in various methods such as "Chained CPI"; and

WHEREAS, disabled veterans disability compensation has not kept pace with the rest of the economy; even in years when there were COLA payments, disability benefits lagged; and

WHEREAS, many disabled veterans and their survivors are on fixed incomes and rely on COLAs to keep pace with their current living expenses; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to provide a realistic cost-of-living allowance for our nation's disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 160
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXCLUDE VETERANS DISABILITY COMPENSATION
FROM COUNTABLE INCOME FOR PURPOSES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR BENEFITS
AND SERVICES FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, by virtue of their service and sacrifices, disabled veterans deserve special benefits that are separate and in addition to benefits the government provides to other citizens; and

WHEREAS, compensation for the effects of service-connected disabilities is counted as income in determinations of eligibility for other government benefits and programs, such as low-income housing through the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and

WHEREAS, the value of compensation is negated and its purposes are defeated when a veteran's receipt of compensation is used to reduce or deny entitlement to government benefits or services available to other citizens; and

WHEREAS, when a veteran's compensation is offset against other entitlements, it is in effect deducted from eligibility for services generally available to citizens who did not serve, and thus the veteran receives nothing for their disability and is thus not compensated; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks legislation to exclude veterans disability compensation from countable income for purposes of eligibility for benefits or services under other government programs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 163

REMOVE THE DELIMITING DATE FOR PERSIAN GULF VETERANS' ILLNESSES

WHEREAS, thousands of Gulf War veterans still suffer from chronic and unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, current law limits filing dates for illnesses and injuries in veterans from certain service during active-duty periods, including the Southwest Asia theater of military operations; and

WHEREAS, section 3.317(i), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), stipulates that diseases associated with service in the Persian Gulf must "manifest either during active military, naval, or air service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations, or to a degree of 10% or more not later than December 31, 2026"; and

WHEREAS, the numerous symptoms experienced by sick Gulf War veterans are not well understood, and the causes of such symptoms remain elusive, and answers could likely remain obscure for some time; and

WHEREAS, little significant research is being conducted on long-term health effects of many of the agents to which veterans were potentially exposed during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, additional research into the long-term health effects of exposures is needed, a fact confirmed in the "Gulf War and Health: Volume 10: Update of Health Effects of Serving in the Gulf War, 2016," on the health effects of exposures during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, filing periods for injuries and illnesses related to service in any theater of military operations must remain open ended to ensure that benefits and services are available when those conditions ultimately manifest; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to support legislation to remove the delimiting date for disabilities as a result of active-duty services in the Southwest Asia theater of operation.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 200

CONSIDER TREATMENT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE-CONNECTED CONDITION AS A CLAIM FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, many service members have suffered from diseases that are recognized to be presumptive; and

WHEREAS, veterans suffering from diseases that include many types of cancer, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases, may not be aware that they may be eligible for service connection, even if they are being treated in a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility; and

WHEREAS, many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide appropriate counseling to veterans or their families on how to file a claim for service-connected benefits; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to enact legislation requiring that treatment by the VA for a condition or disease recognized as presumptively service connected will be considered to be an Intent to File for service connection for compensation purposes.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 204

ENSURE A VETERAN'S MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY BE CONSIDERED AS A BASIS FOR ESTABLISHING ENTITLEMENT TO BENEFITS DUE TO TOXIC EXPOSURE

WHEREAS, a jet mechanic could have been exposed to various types of jet fuel to include JP-5 and JP-8, and that exposure can lead to many different problems such as, but not limited to, neurological disorders, respiratory problems, and cancer; and

WHEREAS, a crash crew member that served at the time when no precautions were taken to prevent exposure to all the various materials used in the production and maintenance of an aircraft, after it has crashed and was either recovered for the reassembly of the aircraft for investigation into the cause of the crash, and which, if it was a jet, would include exposure to jet fuel, or for the collection of the human remains of the personnel on the aircraft; and

WHEREAS, these exposures could be the cause of many cancers and too many other ailments to list here; and

WHEREAS, a service member who handled depleted uranium shells or nuclear weapons could have been exposed to radiation; and

WHEREAS, a study needs to be set up to explore each and every military occupational specialty (MOS) to see what the potential exposures might have been for them; and

WHEREAS, the time frame for the study should look at the oldest of the veterans first so as to not have the study out live the veteran; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a Department of Veterans Affairs commission being set up to investigate the possible exposures of our oldest veterans first and work towards the newest veterans; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that when an exposure is validated that it immediately is added to the PACT Act for presumptive exposure for the veterans of that MOS and does not get held back for a final collective end to the study, AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this will ensure that veterans get the health care and compensation that he or she deserves and has earned in a timely way.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 206
SUPPORT THE AMENDMENT OF THE PACT ACT TO EXPAND COVERAGE FOR
VETERANS WHO WERE EXPOSED TO CHEMICAL AGENTS OR DEFOLIANTS
TO INCLUDE AGENT ORANGE IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

WHEREAS, military service can result in increased health risks for our veterans, and some injuries and illnesses like asthma, cancer and others can take years to manifest; and

WHEREAS, the PACT Act codifies the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) new process for evaluating and determining presumption of exposure and service connection for various chronic conditions when the evidence of a military environmental exposure and the associated health risks are strong in the aggregate but hard to prove on an individual basis; and

WHEREAS, many veterans remain unaware of their eligibility for benefits and services related to potential military toxic exposure; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Army circulated a document on 2 January 1969 with limited distribution on a need-to-know basis titled Final Report, Vegetation Control Plan CY 68 (U); and

WHEREAS, that document, on Page 22, stated "Within ROKA (Republic of Korea), all information concerning defoliation plans and operations were classified as "SECRET" with a limited' distribution on a need-to-know basis. Defoliant application teams employed deceptive measures in those areas under observation from North Korean outposts by labeling equipment and supplies with the words "CORN" for monuron, "RICE" for Agent Blue, and "BEANS" for Agent Orange to give the impression that the working teams were planting crops, and

WHEREAS, agent orange was deployed in the Republic of Korea under deceptive means, yet Korean War veterans and Korea defense veterans are not presumed to have been exposed to it and must fight for benefits; and

WHEREAS, the PACT Act incorporates specific time periods and locations for the use of agent orange, Korea is only mentioned by name without identifying any specific time periods or locations, and Korean War and Korea defense veterans must fight for presumption of exposure; and

WHEREAS, because documentation of the use of agent orange has been classified since at least 1969, it becomes imperative that specific times and locations of its use in Korea be specifically identified in the PACT Act; and

WHEREAS, documentation has been classified, limited, or unavailable to Korean War and Korea defense veterans pursuing disability claims for agent orange; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls upon the United States government to include specific times and locations of the use of agent orange in the Republic of Korea from 1950 to the present; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PACT Act expand coverage for veterans who were exposed to chemical agents or defoliants to include agent orange in the Republic of Korea.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 240
ENSURE COLD WAR NUCLEAR WEAPONS TECHNICIANS ARE CONSIDERED
AS RADIATION EXPOSED AND TOXIC SUBSTANCE EXPOSED VETERANS

WHEREAS, Cold War-era military veteran nuclear weapons technicians worked in silence to maintain our nation's nuclear weapons, directly contributing to our nuclear defense and deterrence; and

WHEREAS, live nuclear weapons in our nation's stockpile emitted radiation through their exterior surfaces and through exposed components during maintenance and handling; and

WHEREAS, veteran nuclear weapons technicians worked with numerous toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, without adequate protection, while maintaining nuclear weapons and related equipment; and

WHEREAS, the primary duties were to maintain, repair, disassemble, replace components, assemble, modify, test, calibrate, transport and store live nuclear weapons in the care and custody of the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, those routine tasks exposed veteran nuclear weapons technicians to ionizing radiation every time they worked on or near a live nuclear warhead, weapon, or weapon system; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) compensation programs have generally not included nuclear weapons technicians from the Cold War period, nor their dependents or survivors as veterans being exposed to radiation or toxic substances; and

WHEREAS, due to long latency periods, the uniqueness of the dangers to which they were exposed, and inadequate exposure data, many of these individuals have been unable to obtain compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, nuclear weapons technicians also worked without adequate respiratory and other personal protection from toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, organic solvents, compounds and metals during nuclear weapons and associated equipment maintenance; and

WHEREAS, the VA does not "presume exposure" to veterans who served as nuclear weapons technicians as it is presumed with several other categories of veterans who were exposed to radiation and other toxic substances; and

WHEREAS, former nuclear weapons technicians and their survivors want entitlement to VA compensation and health care benefits like those granted to civilian workers through the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000; and

WHEREAS, nuclear weapons technicians want nothing more than the respect, recognition, support, health care, and related benefits as other veterans who were exposed to radiation and other toxic substances; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, supports legislation that nuclear weapons technicians will receive recognition and certification as members of a category, class, cohort, or group of veterans with duties designated as "radiation-risk" and "toxic exposure risk" activities and including related "presumed exposure" for both.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 261
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO AMEND THE VETERANS APPEALS
IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION ACT TO ALLOW ANY AND ALL
EVIDENCE TO BE REVIEWED BY A VETERANS LAW JUDGE

WHEREAS, on February 19, 2019, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act (AMA) was officially implemented to streamline the appeals process and expedite decision timelines; and

WHEREAS, a Veterans Law Judge (VLJ) is limited in his or her ability to review all evidence pertaining to the veteran's specific appeal; and

WHEREAS, a veteran or their representative must resubmit evidence already of record within 90 days of a hearing or within 90 days of the VA form 10182 Notice of Disagreement (NOD) being filed; and

WHEREAS, any record outside the 90 day window cannot be reviewed by a VLJ; and

WHEREAS, it is inherently unfair that the veteran or his or her representative be responsible to resubmit evidence pertaining to a claim within the 90 days required by AMA if the evidence is of record; and

WHEREAS, the inability for a VLJ to review all evidence in the record, whether veteran supplied or evidence gathered by the Department of Veterans Affairs in the process of additional claims,

has caused additional delay in the ability of a VLJ to grant benefits sought on appeal to which the veteran is entitled; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to amend the AMA to allow any and all evidence be reviewed by a VLJ that pertains to the appeal.

* * *

**RESOLUTION NO. 277
INCREASE GRANT FUNDING FOR LOCAL VETERANS CEMETERIES**

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement the VA's National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, the program was established to assist states, territories and federally recognized tribal governments in providing gravesites for veterans in those areas where the VA's national cemeteries cannot fully satisfy their burial needs; and

WHEREAS, the funding of the grant may be used only for the purpose of establishing, expanding or improving veterans cemeteries that are owned and operated by a state, federally recognized tribal government or U.S. territory and can only be provided to these entities; and

WHEREAS, the current budget for this grant program is \$5 million per year while the total application requests for this funding far exceed the allocated budget; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, requests an increase in the VA's Veterans Cemetery Grant Program budget to \$10 million per year to cover the establishment, improvement, operations and maintenance for these cemeteries.

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**RESOLUTION NO. 281
SUPPORT LEGISLATION PROVIDING THAT SPECIAL SEPARATION
BENEFIT PAYMENTS NOT BE WITHHELD FROM DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY COMPENSATION PAYMENTS**

WHEREAS, as a result of the downsizing of our military forces, many career military personnel have left service prior to becoming eligible for longevity retirement pay; and

WHEREAS, these individuals are entitled to separation pay; and

WHEREAS, many of these individuals also become eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, a VA General Counsel opinion held that any funds received as a result of the Special Separation Benefit (SSB) must be recouped from any VA disability compensation payment; and

WHEREAS, SSB payments are in no way related to a disability; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to clarify that SSB payments are not disability payments and therefore should not be recouped from VA disability compensation payments.

* * *

**RESOLUTION NO. 283
REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO REQUEST MEDICAL
RECORDS PRIOR TO ROUTINE FUTURE EXAMINATIONS**

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is required to reexamine disabilities that have not become stabilized and are likely to improve; and

WHEREAS, VA regulations require a reduction in rating based on reexaminations disclosing improvement, physical or mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, the VA is not required to request any additional private or government medical records from the veteran prior to a future examination; and

WHEREAS, without any additional medical records prior to the examination, the VA rating specialist will not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the evidence makes it reasonably certain that any improvement will be maintained under the ordinary conditions of life and work; and

WHEREAS, reductions or proposed reductions based solely on VA examinations and not the entire medical evidence available will not reflect the veteran's true disability picture and functional impairment; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, vigorously supports regulatory and statutory requirements to require the VA be mandated to request any private or government medical records prior to scheduling any future examination.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 284
SUPPORT COMPENSABLE EVALUATIONS FOR CERTAIN
DISABILITIES CURRENTLY AT ZERO PERCENT

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities assigns a noncompensable rating for asymptomatic disabilities; and

WHEREAS, a noncompensable rating does not contemplate required medications, prosthetic appliances or employment interference; and

WHEREAS, the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities provides a compensable rating of 10% for other disabilities that require medication only, such as chronic fatigue disorder, coronary artery disease and hypothyroidism; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the assignment of a compensable evaluation of 10% for noncompensable disabilities that require medication, prosthetic appliances or show employment interference.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 294
EXTEND VETERANS' BENEFITS TO SURVIVORS
FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF THE VETERAN

WHEREAS, when a service-connected veteran dies, the compensation only continues to the veteran's surviving spouse or family for the month of the veteran's death; and

WHEREAS, a claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) by the surviving spouse can take over four months to be adjudicated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, the surviving spouse and family are still responsible for the regular monthly household expenses, such as mortgage/rent, utilities and car payments; and

WHEREAS, in many cases, the surviving spouse has become the veteran's caregiver, given up a career and has no other source of income; and

WHEREAS, not only are these families dealing with the loss of the veteran, but many are put in a financial hardship due to the loss of the veteran's compensation and waiting potentially more than four months for DIC benefits; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to extend a deceased veteran's VA compensation benefits to the surviving spouse and family for a certain period of time to assist during the transition of the veteran's death.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 299
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REMOVE PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION
INFORMATION FROM VETERAN'S CLAIM FILE

WHEREAS, an individual's Social Security number is now assigned at birth and is directly linked to bank accounts, income taxes and all personal credit references; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) promised many years ago to discontinue using veterans' Social Security numbers as the veteran's claim number; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, that the VA discontinue using Social Security numbers and promptly assign a unique "C" or claim number to all veterans who have or will file a disability claim with the VA.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 300
SUPPORT OUTDATED FORMS TO BE CONSIDERED INTENTS-TO-FILE

WHEREAS, when the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) updates any standardized form, that a period of one year will be authorized for the claimant to submit an updated form rather than the current 60 days; and

WHEREAS, if the veteran submits an outdated form, then the outdated form would be considered an intent to file for one year from the date of receipt of the outdated form; and

WHEREAS, if the veteran returns an updated form addressing the same contentions on the outdated form, the VA will apply the regulations of the intent to file and honor the effective date of claim as the date of receipt of the outdated form; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports any outdated form received by the VA to be considered an intent to file and the veteran be allowed one year to file the current dated form, in which the VA honors the date of receipt of the outdated form as the earliest effective date as related to section 3.155(c), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 303
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE FOR SERVICE
CONNECTION FOR DISABLING CONDITIONS RESULTING
FROM TOXIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES

WHEREAS, veterans of all military conflicts from the world wars to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been exposed to toxic and environmental exposures such as mustard gas, herbicides, cold weather, chemicals, biological agents, harmful levels of radiation and other combat operation exposures; and

WHEREAS, veterans may not know for years or decades about the toxic or environmental conditions they were exposed to during military service; and

WHEREAS, returning from war, veterans subsequently suffer from disabling conditions that are not immediately identified as a result of such exposures; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) has not always been willing to publicly share information regarding exposures during military service with other government departments or agencies or with the individuals involved; and

WHEREAS, research conducted by the National Institutes of Health, DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and other federal agencies has focused on relationships between toxic and environmental exposures and health outcomes of veterans and pending claims; and

WHEREAS, such research is necessary to ensure veterans receive high-quality health services and benefits to which they are entitled due to diseases or injuries resulting from deployment exposures; and

WHEREAS, in studies mandated by Congress, the National Academy of Sciences continues to review and evaluate scientific literature including specific research studies to determine whether a link exists between exposure and certain physical disorders; and

WHEREAS, the VA and DOD must collaborate and share necessary deployment, health and exposure data to better address the health conditions experienced by disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, these studies to establish and recognize relationships between exposures and diseases take several years to accomplish, requiring veterans to establish claims on a direct basis without conceded exposure to such toxins; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to establish a concession of individual exposures while awaiting conclusions of studies for presumptive diseases and conditions associated with all veterans' related exposures to toxic and environmental hazards; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV vigorously supports the VA's expeditious handling of veterans' claims and the payment of fair and just compensation for conditions associated with all veterans' service and related exposures to toxic and environmental hazards.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 306
SUPPORT MEANINGFUL CLAIMS AND APPEALS REFORM

WHEREAS, Congress has created a system for the administration of veterans benefits and services, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is responsible for processing veterans claims and appeals for myriad benefits and services; and

WHEREAS, the number of claims filed and appeals each year is growing, the complexity of claims and appeals filed is increasing, the backlog of non-rating claims and appeals pending is too large, and the accuracy of claims must continue to be approved; and

WHEREAS, VBA's primary emphasis of reducing the disability claims backlog resulted in less attention to other work that led to significant increases in non-rating-related claims and a rising backlog of appeals; and

WHEREAS, VBA has reached out to veterans service organizations accredited to represent veterans in the claims process for assistance in reforming its claims processing system, particularly the DAV (Disabled American Veterans) because of our experience and success in representing more than 300,000 veterans each year; and

WHEREAS, VBA has made measurable progress in reducing the number of disability claims pending in the backlog (defined as those pending more than 125 days), while also improving accuracy; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, DAV joined with VBA, the Board of Veterans' Appeals and other stakeholders to develop a new framework to reform and modernize how the VA processes appeals that includes several appeal options that claimants could choose, including filing supplemental claims, seeking higher level review of VBA claims decisions and filing formal appeals directly to the Board; and

WHEREAS, VBA is in the process of modernizing the system for adjudicating veterans' appeals; and

WHEREAS, when VBA reports on the average days pending for claims, VBA does not include non-rating claims, and these claims are just as important and should be accounted for when reporting average days of pending claims; and

WHEREAS, any claims or appeals reform must preserve or enhance veterans' due process rights and ensure that adjudications are fair, accurate, timely and of acceptable quality; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on Congress and VBA to support significant and meaningful claims and appeals processing reform to address the VA's overall claims and appeals workloads; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on Congress and VBA ensure that all proposals to streamline and automate the claims development and rating process fully protect veterans' rights, and that automated rating processes, such as automated decision letters, provide sufficient and specific information to inform veterans and their advocates about the reasons and bases for rating decisions; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on the VA and Congress to ensure that sufficient funding is requested and provided to complete all reform and transformation initiatives; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation and other policies that will strengthen training, testing and quality control, as well as accountability measures to ensure that VBA leaders and employees develop a corporate culture focused on getting each claims decided right the first time; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to give due deference to private medical evidence that is competent, credible, probative and otherwise adequate for rating purposes, as well as legislation and policies that encourage the use of private medical evidence, including allowing private physicians to gain access to all Disability Benefit Questionnaires.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 307 SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) TO PROVIDE CHILD CARE SERVICES/ASSISTANCE TO VETERANS ATTENDING VA PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not provide child care assistance or services for veterans; and

WHEREAS, multiple studies and surveys reveal that a significant barrier for veterans seeking and obtaining VA services is child care; and

WHEREAS, child care services would assist in removing a major obstacle for veterans, while vastly improving their ability to successfully comply with health care treatment and complete training, rehabilitative and education programs; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation for the VA to provide child care services/ assistance to veterans attending VA health care, VA benefits programs, VA educational programs, VA employment services, VA homeless programs and VA rehabilitative programs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 308

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO INCREASE DISABILITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, it is the historical policy of DAV that this nation's first duty to veterans is to provide for the rehabilitation of its wartime disabled; and

WHEREAS, the percentage ratings for service-connected disabilities represent, as far as can be practicably determined, the average impairment in earning capacity resulting from such disabilities in civil occupations; and

WHEREAS, compensation increases should be based primarily on the loss of earning capacity; and WHEREAS, disabled veterans who are unable to work because of service-connected disabilities should be entitled to compensation payments commensurate with the after-tax earnings of their able-bodied contemporaries; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to provide a realistic increase in Department of Veterans Affairs compensation rates to bring the standard of living of disabled veterans in line with that which they would have enjoyed had they not suffered their service-connected disabilities.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 310

SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT REQUIRES THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO CONSIDER PRIVATE MEDICAL EVIDENCE SUPPLIED BY LICENSED PRIVATE HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

WHEREAS, section 5125, title 38, United States Code, Acceptance of Reports of Private Physician Examinations, authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to accept private reports in the adjudication of claims for veterans disability benefits; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Health Administration personnel, to include nurse practitioners and physician assistants in independent practices, of equal training and background to their private-sector counterparts, are authorized to complete such medical reports for VA adjudication purposes; and

WHEREAS, submission of private medical records by a claimant, if otherwise adequate for rating purposes, provides claimants with an alternate means to procure evidence in support of their claims, rather than being required to attend mandatory compensation and pension examinations; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks the enactment of legislation that would require the VA to consider private medical evidence supplied by licensed private health care providers to include, but not be limited to, reports from nurse practitioners and physician assistants in private practices.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 318

OPPOSE CHANGE OF DEFINITION OF A HERBICIDE AGENT FOR THE PURPOSES OF ESTABLISHING SERVICE CONNECTION FOR DISABILITIES RELATED TO HERBICIDE EXPOSURE

WHEREAS, section 1116, title 38, United States Code (USC), defines a "herbicide agent" as a chemical in a herbicide used in support of the United States and allied military operations in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, 38 USC §1116 states that for the purposes of establishing service connection for a disability or death resulting from exposure to a herbicide agent, including a presumption of service connection, a veteran who, during active military, naval or air service, served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, shall be presumed to have been exposed during such service to a herbicide agent containing dioxin or 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid and may be presumed to have been exposed during such service to any other chemical compound in a herbicide; and

WHEREAS, congressional records indicate the Secretary of Defense acknowledged herbicides were used on the Korean demilitarized zone as early as April 1968; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Manual M21-1 acknowledges herbicides were used at eight specific Royal Thai Air Force bases; and

WHEREAS, the previous administration sought to amend 38 USC §1116 to redefine herbicides as only those containing tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD); and

WHEREAS, the Administration's proposal states that herbicides with TCDD were only used in Vietnam and not on any other military base outside of Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, the Administration's proposal is inconsistent with known herbicide use outside of Vietnam and would only serve to limit service connection for herbicide exposure to only veterans with Vietnam service; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any change of definition of herbicides that would limit service connection only to those veterans physically in Vietnam.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 324
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROTECT CLAIMANTS FROM THOSE
CHARGING FEES FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLAIMS
PREPARATION, PRESENTATION, OR PROSECUTION

WHEREAS, claims agents and attorneys recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can assist a claimant in the preparation, presentation or prosecution of a claim; and

WHEREAS, fees may not be charged, allowed or paid for services of agents or attorneys with respect to services provided before the date on which a notice of disagreement is filed with respect to the case; and

WHEREAS, veterans service organizations and the VA provide free assistance in the claims process; and

WHEREAS, many reports, past and present, have identified that certain entities charge claimants fees for the preparation, presentation or prosecution of a claim; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to prohibit and penalize those who knowingly solicit or contract for charges or receive any fee or compensation for providing advice on how to file a VA claim; the preparation, presentation or prosecution of such a claim; or unlawfully withhold from any claimant any part of a benefit or claim, all prior to the date on which a higher level review, supplemental claim or a notice of disagreement has been filed.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO 381
SUPPORT THE ADDITION OF TOXIC EXPOSURE RISK ACTIVITY FOR
THOSE EXPOSED TO THE RED HILL WATER CONTAMINATION

WHEREAS, built in the 1940s, the Red Hill underground bulk fuel storage facility contains 20 tanks that are 250 feet tall and can hold a total of 250 million gallons of fuel used by ships and aircraft based at Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam; and

WHEREAS, the site has had several leaks since its construction; and

WHEREAS, on May 6, 2021, 27,000 gallons of fuel leaked from a storage tank at the Red Hill facility flowed into the ground surrounding the facility and into an underground aquifer; and

WHEREAS, the United States government has admitted the Nov. 20, 2021, spill at the Red Hill bulk fuel storage facility caused a nuisance for the 17 "bellwether" plaintiffs, representing a cross-selection of relatives of military members representing more than 7,500 others, including service members, that the United States "breached its duty of care" and that the plaintiffs suffered compensable injuries; and

WHEREAS, a survey jointly conducted by the Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 87% of individuals surveyed reported being sickened and 37% of those surveyed reported seeking medical care to address their symptoms; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not currently recognize the fuel contaminated water as a toxic exposure risk activity or concede that exposure; and

WHEREAS, the VA has not conducted or contracted any studies specific to the exposures from the Red Hill fuel contamination; and

WHEREAS, the VA identifies conditions of ongoing health problems and offers cost-free health care for veterans and family members; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to concede exposure to contaminated water from Red Hill and to contract studies for negative long-term health impacts, and to provide presumptive service connection for any related diseases.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 404
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE VETERANS BENEFITS
ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEE TRAINING

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) employee training program was established to ensure that the rating process is accurate and that veterans receive disability benefits in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, the current training program is not universally administered across the VBA and some Raters are erroneously denying claims for veteran disability compensation without consideration of new laws and changes in policy; and

WHEREAS, some Raters are assigning the date of the Supplemental Review as the effective date of claim, where either the Intent to File a claim date and/or date of claim should be the effective date; and

WHEREAS, these errors delay the correct retroactive pay to the veteran; and

WHEREAS, it could take upwards of months to years to reevaluate a claim and for an accurate decision to be made, thus delaying timely decisions for veteran's claims; and

WHEREAS, proper training is not uniformly being administered to VBA employees to ensure accuracy when there are changes in policy and legislation affecting the claims process; and

WHEREAS, VBA should initiate an improved training process to ensure that benefits raters are universally and consistently informed of legal and policy changes with a goal of making fewer errors and producing timely, accurate rating decisions for each veteran, without the need for appeals; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to improve the VBA's training program to ensure veteran claims are adjudicated correctly and in a timely manner.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 418
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH A SUPPLEMENTARY
SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING GRANT

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides grants to service members and veterans with certain permanent and total service-connected disabilities to help purchase or construct an adapted home or modify an existing home to accommodate a disability; and

WHEREAS, the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant helps veterans with certain service-connected disabilities live independently in a barrier-free environment; and

WHEREAS, SAH grants can be used to construct a specially adapted home on land to be acquired, build a home on land already owned if it is suitable for specially adapted housing, remodel an existing home if it can be made suitable for specially adapted housing, or apply the grant against the unpaid principal mortgage balance of an adapted home already acquired without the assistance of a VA grant; and

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2024 maximum SAH grant amount is \$117,014 and must be used for the purpose of constructing or modifying a home to meet adaptive needs; and

WHEREAS, the maximum grant amount adjusts annually, and the grant benefit cannot be used more than three times up to the maximum dollar amount allowable; and

WHEREAS, eligible veterans can use the VA adapted housing grants, not to exceed the maximum amount at the time of the grant, and once the maximum amount is reached, these veterans must bear the full cost of continued accessible living should they move, need to modify a home or suffer an increase in the severity of their service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, these veterans should not have to choose between surrendering their independence by moving into an inaccessible home or staying in a home simply because they are unable to afford the cost of new modifications; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to establish a supplementary SAH grant for eligible veterans needing to relocate and for veterans experiencing an increase in the severity of their service-connected disabilities; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports the supplementary grant amounts be at least half of the maximum amount at the time of application for the supplementary grant.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 419
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO INVESTIGATE CANCER LINK
TO INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE BASES

WHEREAS, Air Force Global Strike Command approved in 2023 a comprehensive study design by the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine to conduct a formal assessment that addresses specific cancer concerns raised by missile community members; and

WHEREAS, the Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine will take “a comprehensive look across multiple Air Force Specialty Codes, locations and possible additional cancer” concerns raised by the missileer community at bases in North Dakota, Montana and Wyoming; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Air Force officials are investigating whether service members in a wide assortment of jobs who have served at any of the nation’s intercontinental ballistic missile bases are at risk for non-Hodgkin lymphoma and other cancers; and

WHEREAS, missileers are exposed to a variety of chemicals and toxins, ranging from paint in small spaces to fumes from burning classified documents to aerial asbestos and radon exposure; and

WHEREAS, missileers are at times in close proximity to nuclear weapons containing enriched uranium, plutonium and tritium gas; and

WHEREAS, missileers are at times inside enclosed missile silos containing toxic missile propellants, including ammonium perchlorate composite, monomethyl hydrazine and nitrogen tetroxide; and

WHEREAS, nine military officers who had worked decades ago at a nuclear missile base in Montana have been diagnosed with blood cancer and there are “indications” the disease may be linked to their service; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, will strongly encourage the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to investigate and complete an assessment that addresses specific cancer concerns raised by missile community members and if the assessment proves a positive correlation to cancer; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV will lobby Congress to pass legislation to address this issue, similar to the PACT Act of 2022.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 454
SUPPORT ELIMINATION OF THE LINK BETWEEN
CHRONICITY AND CONTINUITY WITH THE CHRONIC DISEASES
AS LISTED IN FEDERAL REGULATIONS

WHEREAS, service connection may be granted for a disability resulting from disease or injury incurred in or aggravated by service; and

WHEREAS, to prevail on the issue of service connection there must be competent evidence of a current disability, medical or lay evidence of in-service occurrence or aggravation of a disease or injury, and medical or lay evidence of a nexus between the present disability and the in-service occurrence or aggravation; and

WHEREAS, a veteran may establish service connection by “chronicity” if the evidence demonstrates the existence of a chronic disease in service and later manifestations of the same disease; and

WHEREAS, prior to the precedent decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in *Walker v. Shinseki*, 708F.3d 1331 (Fed. Cir. 2013), veterans could establish a nexus between a present disability and an in-service occurrence or aggravation by chronicity when evidence demonstrates the existence of a disease in service and present manifestations of the same disease; and

WHEREAS, prior to the precedent decision, the veteran might alternatively establish service connection by “continuity of symptomatology” if the evidence demonstrated a condition was “noted” during service, there was post-service evidence of the same symptomatology, and there was medical or lay evidence of a nexus between the current disability and the post-service symptomatology; and

WHEREAS, the precedent decision limited establishing service connection by chronicity only for the specific chronic diseases listed in section 3.309(a), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); and

WHEREAS, the precedent decision additionally abrogated previous decisions by the court extending the use of continuity of symptomatology to establish service connection for chronic diseases not specifically listed in the regulation, thereby overruling an entire body of case law; and

WHEREAS, the precedent decision removes veterans’ ability to argue chronicity and continuity of symptomatology in all claims for service connection and places a higher standard than intended or

required by the plain language of the statute, thereby hindering the non-adversarial nature of the VA claims system; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to establish service connection for a disease not specifically listed in 38 CFR §3.309(a) using chronicity or continuity of symptomatology.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 470
SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS TO COVER THE TOTAL COST OF AN ADAPTIVE VEHICLE
FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS TO INCLUDE SHIPPING COSTS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) supplies eligible veterans with specially adaptive vehicles to veterans that need them, at no cost to the veteran; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the veteran to pay all costs associated with getting the vehicle from a dealership or VA facility to their home; and

WHEREAS, deliveries can be costly, especially, but not limited to, veterans who reside in Hawaii, Alaska, or any of the United States territories; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, that the VA be responsible for paying the total purchase price of the automobile or other conveyance to include the the total shipping price to deliver the adaptive automobile or other conveyance to the veteran's home of record.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 520
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO GRANT ENTITLEMENT TO AID AND
ATTENDANCE TO A VETERAN'S SERIOUSLY DISABLED CHILD

WHEREAS, part 3, section 356, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), provides additional compensation for a veteran whose child is shown to be permanently incapable of self-support by reason of mental or physical defect at the date of attaining the age of 18 years; and

WHEREAS, a veteran's seriously disabled and or handicapped child is significantly impaired in their ability to conduct activities of daily living; and

WHEREAS, section 1114, title 38, United States Code, provides aid and attendance benefits for veterans, their spouse and dependent parents who have significant disabilities as to be in need of regular aid and attendance; and

WHEREAS, 38 CFR §3.352 states entitlement is held to exist when the veteran requires the assistance of others for the ability to dress and undress themselves, or to keep themselves clean and presentable, or to perform frequent adjustment of special prosthetic or orthopedic appliances, or to attend to bowel and bladder self-care, or to protect themselves from hazards or dangerous incidents to their daily environment; and

WHEREAS, the veteran's seriously disabled child, in many cases, requires the aid and attendance of another individual to perform functions of daily living; and

WHEREAS, the seriously disabled child is already deemed to be handicapped by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, it is inherently unfair that the veteran and the seriously disabled child carry this additional burden without additional compensation despite being an immediate family member of the veteran; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to allow the seriously disabled child of a veteran who meets the aforementioned criteria be granted the ability to seek additional compensation by way of aid and attendance.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 537
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH MULTIPLE AUTOMOBILE
GRANTS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS

WHEREAS, Congress authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide financial assistance to eligible veterans through an automobile grant in the amount of \$21,058.69; and

WHEREAS, this one-time grant is used toward the purchase of a new or used automobile to accommodate a veteran or service member with certain disabilities that resulted from a condition incurred or aggravated during active military service; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation (DOT) reports the average useful life of a vehicle is 11.5 years; vehicles that have been modified structurally, including modifications to accommodate the weight of a veteran and their wheelchair, can have an accelerated depreciation of usefulness; and

WHEREAS, on average, the cost to replace modified vehicles ranges from \$40,000 to \$65,000 when the vehicle is new and \$21,000 to \$35,000 when the vehicle is used; and

WHEREAS, these substantial costs, coupled with inflation, present a financial hardship for many disabled veterans who need to replace their primary mode of transportation once it reaches its life of service; and

WHEREAS, the cost of replacing modified vehicles purchased through the VA automobile grant program presents a financial hardship for veterans who must bear the full replacement cost once the adapted vehicle has exceeded its useful life, the divergence of a vehicle's depreciating value and the increasing cost of living only compounds this hardship; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to establish multiple automobile grants for veterans to use once every 10 years, equaling the current grant maximum in effect at the time of vehicle replacement.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 568
PROVIDE FOR A COMPENSABLE RATING FOR HEARING-IMPAIRED
VETERANS REQUIRED TO USE HEARING AIDS

WHEREAS, veterans can be rated at 0% based on their audiometric results and still be required to use hearing aids due to their specific type of hearing loss; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD) is predicated on the industrial impairment that each disability provides to the disabled veteran; and

WHEREAS, hearing loss can impact a veteran's ability to communicate and negatively affect relationships, school/work performance, safety and emotional well-being; and

WHEREAS, section 4.10, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, notes that "the basis of disability evaluations is the ability of the body as a whole, or of the psyche, or of a system or organ of the body to function under the ordinary conditions of daily life including employment"; and

WHEREAS, a National Institutes of Health study, "The Socioeconomic Impact of Hearing Loss in U.S. Adults," published in March 2015, noted, "Even after controlling for education and important demographic factors, hearing loss is independently associated with economic hardship, including both low income and unemployment/underemployment. The societal impact of hearing loss is profound"; and

WHEREAS, the VASRD does account for required prostheses or required medication for control, as it provides a 10% evaluation for over 15 different disabilities that require daily medication for control of said disability; and

WHEREAS, it is a general principle of the VASRD that ratings are not offset by the function artificially restored by a prosthetic device; and

WHEREAS, assigning a compensable rating for medically required hearing aids would be consistent with minimum ratings otherwise provided throughout the rating schedule; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the VA granting veterans with high-frequency hearing loss a compensable rating (10%) when it has been medically determined that the veteran requires and has been issued a hearing amplification device.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 569
SUPPORT A CHANGE IN REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS
FOR TEMPORARY TOTAL DISABILITY RATINGS

WHEREAS, with advances in modern medicine and increasing emphasis on more efficient use of health care resources, health care providers are being encouraged to utilize suitable alternatives to inpatient care; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence, veterans are often treated through home health services or convalesce at home rather than in hospital; and

WHEREAS, convalescent ratings are currently only authorized where inpatient or outpatient treatment resulted in surgery or immobilization of a major joint by cast; and

WHEREAS, instances occur in which a veteran's treatment does not involve surgery or casting of a major joint, but the veteran undergoes healing, convalescence or a therapeutic course in the home, with a duration of one month or more; and

WHEREAS, exacerbation of a service-connected disability sometimes contraindicates work or other activities for periods of one month or more; and

WHEREAS, in such instances, a therapeutic course, convalescence or restriction from work for one month or more would occur in the home in lieu of hospitalization; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a change in section 4.30, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, to provide a temporary total rating of a veteran if treatment or exacerbation of a service-connected disability results in a condition of temporary total incapacity for employment or temporary unavailability for employment by reason of home health care or ambulatory care, bed rest or confinement to the home, or contraindication of work activities for one month or more.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 570
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE
CONNECTION FOR DISEASES AND ILLNESSES RELATED TO TOXIC
EXPOSURE AT MALMSTROM AIR FORCE BASE, MONTANA

WHEREAS, Malmstrom Air Force Base was constructed in 1942 as Great Falls Army Air Force Base (AFB) in Montana; and

WHEREAS, several air and bombardment groups trained at the base starting in World War II; and WHEREAS, following the war, this site became a hub for supply transportation to the northern Pacific and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, Malmstrom AFB is home to a vast field of 150 Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile silos; and

WHEREAS, missileers, to include missile alert facility managers, ride caged elevators deep underground into a small operation bunker encased in a thick wall of concrete and steel; and

WHEREAS, they remain there sometimes for days, ready to turn the launch keys if ordered to by the President; and

WHEREAS, missileers, to include missile alert facility managers, are exposed to a variety of chemicals and toxins ranging from paint in small spaces to fumes from burning classified documents to aerial asbestos and radon exposure; and

WHEREAS, spills or leaks of propellant occurred frequently, contaminating silos for up to six weeks—a period in which the missiles were manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and

WHEREAS, Malmstrom AFB has a grim legacy of toxic contamination, particularly with perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances; and

WHEREAS, these dangerous chemicals are usually dubbed PFAS or “forever chemicals,” encompassing over 9,000 different substances; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Air Force is aware that there are indications of a possible association between cancer and missile combat crew service at Malmstrom AFB; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to authorize scientific studies of the environmental and toxic exposures at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 571
SUPPORT REFORMS RELATING TO RECOVERY OF DEBTS
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, it is a reasonable expectation that recipients of overpayments are required to repay the debt; and

WHEREAS, the current overpayment and debt system allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to collect debts regardless of when the debt was created; and

WHEREAS, debt collections by the VA include complete recoupment of the veteran's monthly benefit payments and, in many cases, put the veteran at risk of financial hardships; and

WHEREAS, additional amounts of debt created by the VA's lack of timely action are often added to the debt, thus creating an inequity on the veteran; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to reform the VA overpayment and debt collection systems; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to limit the amount of monies recouped from the veteran's monthly payment to not greater than 25% of the payment amount; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation preventing the VA from collecting debts incurred more than five years prior; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation that requires the VA to waive any additional amounts of debt created by their own lack of timely action on evidence and information received regarding but not limited to dependency changes, income changes, drill status, education changes or incarceration adjustments.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 572
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS TO IMPLEMENT AN OPTIONAL PATH FOR TELEPHONIC INITIAL
CONTACT FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED VETERANS

WHEREAS, section 12102, title 42, United States Code, establishes persons' disabilities and major life activities to be covered; and

WHEREAS, in enacting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Congress intended that the Act "provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities" and provide broad coverage; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is required as a public entity to follow the precepts of the ADA; and

WHEREAS, it is also a VHA policy that contacting the hospital via a telephonic device requires the veteran to engage the automated system through a series of keypad tones; and

WHEREAS, these actions are prohibitive where numeric depressions on a keypad, landline, devices such as a landline or mobile device are difficult if not overwhelming for a visually impaired veteran; and

WHEREAS, a second person is often required to assist the veteran in initiating first contact counter to the precepts of the ADA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop and implement a consistent policy requiring VA health care facilities and Veterans Benefits Administration offices and call centers with optional paths for telephonic initial contact.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 573
REMOVE REQUIREMENT OF MANIFESTATION OF CHLORACNE AND
PORPHYRIA CUTANEA TARDA AND ACUTE AND SUBACUTE PERIPHERAL
NEUROPATHY WITHIN ONE YEAR OF EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently recognizes a total of 14 diseases as presumptive to Agent Orange exposure; and

WHEREAS, section 1116, title 38, United States Code, establishes presumptive service connection for diseases based on exposure to Agent Orange, which requires that chloracne and porphyria cutanea tarda become manifest to a degree of 10% or more within one year after service in the Republic of Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, section 3.307(a)(6)(ii), title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, requires the presumptive disease, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy to become manifest to a degree of 10% or more within one year of exposure to herbicides; and

WHEREAS, the limitations placed on the three above noted diseases create unreasonable requirements on veterans to provide evidence of manifestations of symptoms from 50 years ago and create an inequity; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to remove the requirement of manifestation of symptoms to a compensable degree within one year of exposure for chloracne and porphyria cutanea tarda and acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 574
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO INCLUDE SERVICE NEAR THE FUKUSHIMA
DAIICHI NUCLEAR POWER STATION, AS A RADIATION RISK ACTIVITY

WHEREAS, due to a major earthquake in Japan, a 15-meter tsunami disabled the power supply and cooling of three Fukushima nuclear reactors, causing a nuclear accident on March 11, 2011, which caused severe damage to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, which resulted in the release of radiation into the environment; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) estimates that nearly 75,000 DOD-affiliated individuals were on or near the mainland of Japan during the period of March 12 to May 11, 2011; and

WHEREAS, after the nuclear accident, the DOD established the Operation Tomodachi Registry to monitor the health impacts of those service members exposed to radiation; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation's (UNSCEAR's) May 2013 Report to the General Assembly concluded "the doses to the general public, both those incurred during the first year and estimated for their lifetimes, are generally low or very low"; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 UNSCEAR decided to update the report to reflect the latest findings, publishing their report in March 2021, which broadly confirms the major findings and conclusions of the 2013 report; and

WHEREAS, despite the conclusions of reports from UNSCEAR, the Japanese government in 2018 acknowledged a connection between the death of a former plant worker and radiation exposure; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs currently does not recognize those veterans who served near Fukushima were exposed to radiation levels that warrant inclusion as a radiation risk activity; and

WHEREAS, veterans who served at Fukushima have a difficult time establishing direct service connection for cancers related to the radiation exposure; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on Congress to enact legislation to expand radiation risk activities and presume exposure for those service members who served in the identified locations during the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident of March 11, 2011.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 575
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO INCLUDE MCMURDO STATION,
ANTARCTICA, AS A RADIATION RISK ACTIVITY

WHEREAS, Operation Deep Freeze was a U.S. Navy-operated small nuclear power plant at the McMurdo Station, Antarctica, from 1962 to 1979; and

WHEREAS, the reactor was shut down in 1972, when a leak was discovered, and the reactor was decommissioned from 1974 to 1979; and

WHEREAS, per the Defense Threat Reduction Agency report of June 2013, all support personnel stationed at McMurdo Station were potentially exposed to external gamma and neutron radiation, and internal radiation from the intake of radioactive materials by inhalation or ingestion; and

WHEREAS, seven potential sources of external exposure were identified, to include the reactor, radioactive waste, radioactive effluent, radioactive materials in passing plumes and contaminated soil deposited on the ground, while six potential sources of internal exposure were identified, to include radioactive materials deposited in the tissues and organs after breathing air and ingesting water, soil and dust that contained radioactive material; and

WHEREAS, the report concluded that calculated doses are low, and the associated probability that disease could have arisen from these doses is also low; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently does not recognize those veterans who served at McMurdo Station were exposed to radiation levels that warrant inclusion in the definition of radiation risk activities; and

WHEREAS, veterans who served at McMurdo Station have a difficult time establishing direct service connection for cancers related to the radiation exposure; and

WHEREAS, the presumption of service connection for radiation exposure applies to radiation risk activity participants, which does not include those who served at McMurdo Station; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on Congress to enact legislation to expand radiation risk activities and presume exposure to those service members who served at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 578
INVESTIGATE THE EFFECTS ON VETERANS STATIONED
AT TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that contamination of water at Camp Pendleton caused various cancers and other medical problems due to such chemicals as trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), dichloroethylene (DCE) and other chemicals; and

WHEREAS, Tyndall AFB was on the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund cleanup list; and
WHEREAS, Tyndall AFB water was contaminated with lead and lead pellets, chlorinated solvents,

dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and breakdown products, and various metals; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that military personnel stations at Tyndall AFB, Florida, are at a risk for certain diseases/cancers; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation for a study to be conducted that specifically considers medical problems to military personnel and their families while stationed at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 579
INVESTIGATE THE EFFECTS ON VETERANS STATIONED AT
NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND, WASHINGTON

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that contamination of water at Camp Pendleton caused various cancers and other medical problems due to such chemicals as trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), dichloroethylene (DCE) and other chemicals; and

WHEREAS, NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, was on the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund cleanup list; and

WHEREAS, NAS Whidbey Island was contaminated with numerous chemicals, including but not limited to TCE, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAHs), dioxins (already covered by the VA as herbicide exposure), heavy metals to include lead, and arsenic; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that military personnel stationed at, or on temporary duty to, NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, have a higher chance for certain diseases/cancers; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation for a study to be conducted that specifically considers medical problems to military personnel and their families while stationed at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 580
INVESTIGATE THE EFFECTS ON VETERANS STATIONED
AT SCHOFIELD BARRACKS HAWAII

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that contamination of water at Camp Pendleton caused various cancers and other medical problems due to such chemicals as trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), dichloroethylene (DCE) and other chemicals; and

WHEREAS, Schofield Barracks, on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, was on the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund Cleanup list; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that military personnel stationed at Schofield Barracks are at risk for neurological disorders, diabetes, cancer and birth defects in children; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation for a study to be conducted that specifically considers medical problems to military personnel and their families while stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

* * *

(Whereupon, the Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights chair withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Trent. You have heard the motion. May I have a second?

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JOSEPH PARSETICH: Mic 4.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 4.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PARSETICH: Joe Parsetich, Chapter 2 from the great State of Montana seconds that motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: In accordance with Rule 9, now is the time for any rejected resolutions to be read. Are there any rejected resolutions that you wish read?

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION AND VETERANS RIGHTS CHAIRMAN DILKS: No. (Laughter)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Hearing none, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered. (Applause) Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Committee on Legislation and Veterans Rights chair withdrew from the stage and the commander and adjutant adjusted the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I would like to call upon Chairman Juliet Taylor for the report of the Committee on Hospital and Voluntary Services.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Committee on Hospital and Voluntary Services chair advanced to the podium.)

HOSPITAL AND VOLUNTARY SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN JULIET TAYLOR: Comrade Commander and delegates, the National Convention Committee on Hospitals and Voluntary Services was called to order on August 4th, 2024, by the Committee Advisors John Retzer and John Kleindienst.

The first order of business was the election of the Convention Committee chairman and secretary. Juliet Taylor was elected as chairwoman and Adam Greathouse was elected as secretary.

The Committee then proceeded to review the resolutions submitted. And I will now report to you the resolutions recommended for adoption by this convention. For the purpose of saving time I will read only the number and the purpose of the resolutions.

4, include domiciliary care in the form of mental health and rehabilitative treatment program in the definition of Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Treatment;

16, require the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase efficiency;

17, ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs Clinical Appeals Process protects veterans;

18, support the provision of comprehensive Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Services to enroll veterans;

19, oppose the restriction on eligibility of military medically retired veterans to receive care in the Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs health care systems;

20, support legislation to change eligibility for Community Nursing Home program;

32, support research regarding female veteran menopause;

33, provide oversight by the Department of Veterans Affairs of service dog permitted into medical centers and community-based outpatient centers;

34, require a veteran attending Department of Veterans Affairs physician to provide a medical opinion with regard to a claim for VA disability compensation; (Applause)

35, support legislation to include 11-51 protection under Title 38, United States Code, for veterans using Department of Veterans Affairs community care services;

36, establish studies on the long-term effects of exposure to Bisphenol-A, a study found in plastic disposable water bottles;

39, support enhanced medical services and benefits for women veterans;

40, support legislation to grant the president, vice-president and members of Congress the privilege to use the veteran health care system and to receive their care exclusively from the Department of Veterans Affairs; (Applause)

41, provide comprehensive dental care to all service-connected disabled veterans within the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system;

42, ensure sufficient access to care to meet the health needs of veterans residing in rural and remote areas;

43, support legislation to authorize scholarships for new mental health practitioners in exchange for commitments to serve veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs' facilities;

44, support the expansion of stellate ganglion block research and implement to treat post-traumatic stress disorder;

55, support the care provided to veterans with service-connected disabilities affecting the ability to procreate through assisted reproductive technology;

56, support Department of Veterans Affairs medical and prosthetic research programs;

57, ensure adequate staffing of patient advocates in the veteran health care system;

58, support equity in access to services and benefits for racial and ethnic minority service-connected veterans;

59, encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to submit candidates for the Volunteer of the Year program;

91, provide authorization for DAV to act in support of or in opposition of legislation issues, address the research conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs;

92, support legislation to allow appeals related to the VHA community care program;

93, support legislation directing the VA to research and make available psychedelic compounds for treated mental health condition and traumatic brain injury;

94, support legislation to improve and institute health care initiatives of the DoD;

95, support legislation to provide reimbursement for travel and lodging for service-connected veterans requiring treatment in the current VA foreign medical program;

96, resolution to enhance VA caregiver rule;

97, resolution in support of transferring veterans' medical records from DoD to the VA system automatically;

119, support a more liberal review of "Other Than Honorable" discharges in cases of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, and other trauma for the purpose of eligibility for the Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and services;

168, support effective care for veterans with dementia within the Department of Veterans Affairs;

169, urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide prompt screening and treatment for veterans exposed to depleted uranium and support additional research into the long-term health care effects of such exposures;

170, change the medical enrollment for World War II and Korean War veterans;

170 – I'm sorry, 171, ensure sufficient resources for Department of Veterans Affairs research to improve care and benefits for veterans exposed to military toxic and environmental hazards;

174, support a change in the methods of collecting L-VAP hours from the current monthly submission by each chapter hours in Excel to using a kiosk or computer for data entry in combination with any smart device that can log into a website; (Applause)

175, support the Congressional funding for the creation of a VA national rehabilitative special events office;

176, ensure protection and expansion of rights and responsibilities for VA patients;

177, support changes to highly rural transit grants requirements;

193, support modernization Department of Veterans Affairs health care infrastructure;

194, ensure a safe, secure, and effective electronic health care for veterans that allows the Department of Veterans Affairs to fulfill core missions of patient care and research and training;

195, oppose recovery of a third-party payment for service-connected disabilities;

196, support effective recruitment, retention, and development of the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system workforce;

197, support improvements in providing training and beneficiary travel benefits for veterans seeking specialized training programs and care for military sexual trauma;

208, maternity care coordination;

210, return the check-in travel claim kiosk to all VA hospitals, clinics, and medical buildings; (Applause)

211, all veterans have the right to health care;

212, testing for ovarian cancer;

223, support legislation to improve Department of Veterans Affairs programs designed to prevent and treat substance use disorders in veterans;

224, support programs improvement and enhance resources for Department of Veterans Affairs mental health programs and suicide prevention;

227, support state veterans' home program;

228, VHA increase hiring of critical care professionals;

233, repeal beneficiary travel deductible for service-connected disabled veterans and increase reimbursement rates;

234, address social determinants to promote health equity among veterans;

235, implement a pilot program to assess the effectiveness of post-traumatic stress growth programs;

236, provide easy and equitable access to Department of Veterans Affairs' transportation benefits and services;

237, increase veterans access to Department of Veterans Affairs' facilities by extending coverage on weekdays and on weekends;

246, support legislation to eliminate or reduce Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense health care copayments for service-connected disabled veterans;

247, urge the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical facilities to provide a reasonable access to service dogs and guide dogs, including enclosed animal relief areas;

248, support the rights and benefits earned by service-connected Native American and Alaska Native veterans;

249, expand eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs to provide hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care to all veterans of the Korean Conflict;

250, provide beneficiary travel benefits for unscheduled visits to receive care from the Department of Veterans Affairs;

264, resolution on improving the VA distribution of medical information between facilities and access to any medical records by any and all veterans' medical facilities;

265, support in recruiting VHA physician assistants;

274, create a three-digit number to report intimate partner violence;

278, support a robust, comprehensive, rehabilitative and research program for veterans with traumatic brain injury;

279, conduct well-designed studies to determine effectiveness of the hyperbaric oxygen therapy on treatment-resistant traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder;

330, encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to submit candidates for the DAV scholarship program;

331, establish automatic payments of travel pay for eligible disabled veterans without additional barriers;

332, support enhanced medical services and benefits for women veterans;

335, urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to support comprehensive research on health effects of children of Vietnam Veterans exposed to Agent Orange;

336, support sustained and sufficient funding to improve services for homeless veterans;

337, encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to process volunteer applications in a timely manner;

338, ensure quality and timeliness for the Veterans Health Administration and veterans' community care program providers;

339, request change of policy so that retired medical staff can return without financial penalty, as necessary, to supplement current staffing at Department of Veterans Affairs' medical centers;

340, oppose means testing service-connected veterans for Department of Veterans Affairs' healthcare;

341, support programs to provide psychological and mental health counseling services to family members of veterans suffering from post-deployment mental health challenges or other service-connected conditions;

342, support humane, consistent, pain management programs in the veterans' health care system;

343, support legislation to improve and provide comprehensive services for caregivers of severely-wounded, injured, and ill veterans of all eras;

344, support Department of Veterans Affairs' research into the medical efficacy of cannabis and service-connected disabled veterans; (Applause)

345, support the automatic enrollment of medical-retired veterans into the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system with an opt-out provision;

346, improve urgent and emergency care benefit for service-connected veterans;

347, enhance the civilian health and medical program for the Department of Veterans Affairs' benefit services;

348, enhance long-term services and supports for service-connected disabled veterans;

356, support legislation to extend eligibility of a qualifying veteran's adult child for the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans' Affairs;

365, Veterans' Affairs Programs of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Eligibility expansion;

380, resolution to support legislation that would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expand the VA's scope of all health beyond that of dentistry and to fund research into connections between PTSD and oral health;

403, strengthen and protect the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system;

405, resolution to support legislation to expand the current Veterans Affairs Foreign Medical Program;

406, urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve the Nursing Home Program;

407, urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to make improvements in the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System for veterans;

409, provide peer to peer infertility care program coordinator;

414, provide research in preventing suicide in the LGBTQ+ veterans;

427, support legislation to provide for service connection for health care conditions that have been determined to be related to the Anthrax shot;

428, support sufficient resources for poly-trauma units at Department of Veterans Affairs' medical centers;

429 support sufficient funding for Department of Veterans Affairs' prosthetics and sensory-aid service and timely delivery of prosthetic items;

430, ensure Department of Veterans Affairs' staff who work with rehabilitated, blind, and visually-impaired veterans have adequate training in assisted technology;

434, ensure adequate representation for all subgroups of veterans that include service-connected veterans;

436, support legislation to provide fitness supplements for service-connected physical and mental health;

437, review recertification requirements that discourage Community-Based program providers from getting recertified at the VA;

475, support research and expand access to investigational drugs for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis;

478, develop clinical guidelines for prevention, early detection, and intervention for lung cancer;

479, urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to apply a consistent, coordinated, care policy for enrolled veterans with home residence in two states;

491, require the VHA and the VBA to address the need for telephone access to hospital services and benefits for visually-impaired veterans trying to obtain said health care and other benefits via landline and mobile phone devices;

543, improve timely reimbursement by Department of Veterans Affairs for purchased care, protecting veterans from debt collection and adverse credit reporting from such care;

548, support naming the Department of Veterans Affairs Mare Island Clinic in Vallejo, California, as the Delphine Metcalf-Foster VA Clinic; (Applause)

549, childcare assistance for veterans with dependents;

583, support legislation to establish procedures to require that a veteran provide a written consent for the prescription for certain drugs prescribed by physicians and pharmacists;

584, ensure equity and quality in access from Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans' Community Care Program;

585, provide research and assess the effectiveness of the use of immersive technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality, sometimes collectively called "extended reality";

587, request the Department of Veterans Affairs cooperate with Fischer House fundraising;

588, adequately fund and sustain the Readjustment Counseling Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs and its Vet Center program;

589, ensure Department of Veterans Affairs' facilities and information resources are accessible to veterans with disabilities;

590, support a consistent benefit for service and guide dogs prescribed by Veterans Affairs' providers and examine the benefits of training service dogs for disabled veterans;

591, support a priority access for service-connected veterans with the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system;

592, ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs may not deny a veteran any benefit if that veteran participates in state-approved marijuana programs;

597, extend appreciation to the Carl T. Hayden Veteran Administration Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona, for the success of the 2024 DAV National Convention.

Comrade Commander, this completes the report of the Committee on Hospital and Voluntary Services. On the behalf of the Committee I move for the adoption of these resolutions and that the Committee be discharged with the thanks of the national convention. (Applause)

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RESOLUTION NO. 4
INCLUDE DOMICILIARY CARE IN THE FORM OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND REHABILITATIVE TREATMENT PROGRAM IN THE DEFINITION OF
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE TREATMENT

WHEREAS, millions of veterans suffer from chronic mental health disabilities incurred during or as a result of military service; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers inpatient domiciliary care in the form of the Mental Health Residential and Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP) for said disabilities; and

WHEREAS, VA compensation for total disability (100% rate) is paid to veterans in cases of hospitalization for more than 21 days under the provisions of section 4.29, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); and

WHEREAS, veterans receiving treatment in MH RRTP are unable to pursue their occupations and lose income during their period of inpatient care, creating reluctance to seek needed mental health treatment; and

WHEREAS, prior to October 2018, the VA paid compensation for total disability during the period of MH RRTP treatment to qualifying veterans; and

WHEREAS, the United States has made a commitment to caring for veterans who incur injuries and other chronic medical conditions in the defense of this great nation; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports amending 38 CFR §4.29 to include MH RRTP in the definition of VA health care treatment that establishes eligibility for payment of compensation for total disability.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 16
REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INCREASE
EFFICIENCY IN THE RECRUITMENT, HIRING AND CREDENTIALING
OF CERTAIN HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS UNDERGOING
SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED SERVICES

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has demonstrated difficulty in timely filling vacant health care positions required to meet the needs of service-connected disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, certain active members of the armed forces serve in a health care capacity and are being discharged from the armed forces under honorable conditions and are seeking employment in health care; and

WHEREAS, the VA historically takes an excessive amount of time to recruit, screen and hire new employees, actions that could be expedited by hiring qualified veterans with current training and background checks; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to require the VA to carry out a program to increase efficiency in the recruitment and hiring by the VA of health care workers that are undergoing separation from the armed forces and to create uniform credentialing standards for certain health care professionals of the VA.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 17
ENSURE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLINICAL
APPEALS PROCESS PROTECTS VETERANS

WHEREAS, through service to their nation in which they made extraordinary sacrifices and contributions, service-disabled veterans have earned and deserve high-quality, comprehensive and veteran-focused health care designed to meet their unique circumstances and needs; and

WHEREAS, all federal providers and most health insurers have processes to ensure that beneficiaries have enforceable protections that allow them to obtain medically necessary care within their health benefits package; and

WHEREAS, these processes for patient grievances and central projections to receive care and services are imperative, particularly for health care systems such as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which use capitated payment models for which there are incentives to conserve resources; and

WHEREAS, the VA MISSION Act (Public Law 115–182) greatly expanded the VA's purchased community care program, making more than 40% of veterans enrolled in the VA health care system eligible for VA community care; and

WHEREAS, the VA's current clinical appeals process is outlined in VHA Directive 1041, Appeal of Veterans Health Administration Clinical Decisions, which outlines procedures for resolving clinical disputes through the Department, but expert or external reviews are performed at the Chief Medical Officer's discretion rather than the veteran's request; and

WHEREAS, continuity of care or services during the clinical appeals process is not guaranteed under the current process; and

WHEREAS, veterans have no right to external, expedited or independent review, or to timely and fair hearings, including before a multidisciplinary clinical team, an administrative law judge or federal district court in the VA's current clinical appeals, making the process less comprehensive and fair than appeals processes private health insurers and other federal payers are required to provide; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on Congress to enact legislation requiring a standardized, fair and impartial process to address veterans' clinical disagreements, grievances and disputes, to include statutory protections that are at least comparable to those afforded patients under other federal and federally supported programs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to revise the current clinical appeal process, with input from service-connected disabled veterans and other stakeholders, to one that is equitable and transparent and train appropriate staff to execute the new policy in a standardized manner.

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RESOLUTION NO. 18

SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF COMPREHENSIVE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO ENROLLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, it is the policy of DAV that veterans should be afforded quality and timely health care services by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) because of their honorable service to our nation; and

WHEREAS, care provided to veterans in the community when VA care is inaccessible should be done through responsive integrated networks that deliver high-value, quality care; and

WHEREAS, it is the conviction of DAV that quality health care for veterans is achieved when health care providers are given the freedom and resources to provide the most effective and evidence-based care available; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration plays a critical role in the delivery of health care services to our nation's sick and disabled veterans and is the largest direct federal provider of health care services, the largest clinical training ground for the health professions and a leader in medical research; and

WHEREAS, although the veterans health care system is provided advance appropriations for medical care, it is still at the discretion of Congress to provide a sufficient level of funding; and

WHEREAS, due to consistently inadequate appropriations levels, the VA has been forced at times to restrict, ration and deny access to health care implicitly promised in connection with veterans' military service; and

WHEREAS, the VA health care system must be provided sufficient funding to ensure, at a minimum, the following standards are met:

- Promote and ensure health care quality and value, and protect veterans' safety in the health care system;
- Guarantee access to a full continuum of care, from preventive through hospice services, including complementary and integrative care such as yoga, massage, acupuncture, peer support, chiropractic and other nontraditional therapies;
- Receive adequate funding through appropriations for care of all enrolled veterans;
- Fairly and equitably distribute resources to treat the greatest number of veterans requiring health care;
- Ensure barriers to care for veterans in ethnic, racial and sexual minority groups are addressed, including staff expertise in addressing these groups' needs with sensitivity;
- Furnish quality primary care and gender-specific services necessary to meet the needs of a growing population of women veterans;

- Provide all supplies, prosthetic devices and medications, including over-the-counter medication, necessary for the proper treatment of service-connected disabled veterans;
- Preserve the VA's mission and role as a provider of specialized services in areas such as blindness, burns, amputation, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury and dysfunction, mental illness and long-term care;
- Maintain the integrity of an independent VA health care delivery system as representing the primary responsible entity for the delivery of health care services to enrolled veterans;
- Modernize its human resources management system to enable the VA to compete for, recruit and retain the types and quality of VA employees needed to provide comprehensive health care services to sick and disabled veterans;
- Maintain a strong and veteran-focused research program; and
- Establish and sustain effective telehealth programs as an aid to access to VA health care, particularly for rural and remote populations; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that embodies the concepts and principles enumerated above and establishes certainty to clearly defined VA health care services for enrolled veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 19
OPPOSE ANY RESTRICTION ON ELIGIBILITY OF MILITARY MEDICALLY
RETIRED VETERANS TO RECEIVE CARE IN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OR
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS

WHEREAS, military medically retired veterans were promised and earned lifetime health care through the Department of Defense (DOD) for completion of the required period of military service; and

WHEREAS, as veterans, they are separately entitled to the same health care provided to eligible veterans, generally through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, one of the two health care systems may offer advantages that the other does not offer; and

WHEREAS, a veteran's use of this dual entitlement to receive the best services of both systems does not constitute unnecessary duplicate use of health care services or duplication of costs to the government; and

WHEREAS, entitlement to care under one system is not itself justification to end separate entitlement to care through the other system; and

WHEREAS, by virtue of their service and sacrifices, veterans have earned special benefits that are separate and in addition to benefits the government provides to other citizens; and

WHEREAS, enrollment in VA or DOD health care, especially in the case of service-connected disabled veterans, should never become a bar or obstacle to the receipt of benefits from either of these health care systems; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any action to restrict health care eligibility for military medically retired veterans in either the DOD or the VA health care systems.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 20
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO CHANGE ELIGIBILITY FOR
COMMUNITY NURSING HOME PROGRAM

WHEREAS, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Notice 2020–32 establishes policy for new community care; and

WHEREAS, eligibility is mandatory for a veteran who has a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70% or greater; that includes veterans with a single disability rated at 60% and has a total disability rating based on Individual Unemployability; and

WHEREAS, VHA Notice 2020–32 does not consider common etiology in determining the eligibility for community nursing care; and

WHEREAS, the lack of consideration of this factor may prevent veterans from qualifying for community nursing care; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports VHA Notice 2020–32 be amended to make veterans eligible for community

nursing care if they have disability evaluations in which common etiology is noted that significantly impairs the veteran's ability to perform daily or independent living skills.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 32

SUPPORT RESEARCH REGARDING FEMALE VETERAN MENOPAUSE

WHEREAS, the symptoms of menopause can lead to anxiety and/or depression, pain and anger (which are just a few of the symptoms); and

WHEREAS, these symptoms can be exacerbated for women with a history of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently prescribes hormone therapy in the form of patches and pills to treat female menopause; and

WHEREAS, there is a considerable lack of research in the area of female veterans versus nonveterans in the scope of PTSD and menopause; and

WHEREAS, the influence of biologic sex on the neurobiology of PTSD could result in better treatment of menopause in female veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports research regarding female veteran menopause and its impact on mental health and impact to physiology of female veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 33

PROVIDE OVERSIGHT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF SERVICE DOGS PERMITTED INTO THE MEDICAL CENTERS AND COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CENTERS

WHEREAS, service dogs are an essential part of veterans' lives who suffer from mental or physical disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the veteran and their service dog should have the proper training and meet a specified list of criteria to be considered a service dog team; and

WHEREAS, untrained dogs that are admitted to a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility present a danger to trained service dog teams and others; and

WHEREAS, oversight of admission of service dog teams to VA facilities should be controlled by a Service Dog Champion Representative of the VA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the VA creating an office of oversight for the service dog program to ensure the safety of service dogs and their veterans from untrained dogs allowed in to the facility.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 34

REQUIRE A VETERAN'S ATTENDING DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) PHYSICIAN TO PROVIDE A MEDICAL OPINION WITH REGARD TO A CLAIM FOR VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, section 5103A, title 38, United States Code, requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assist a veteran by providing a medical examination and opinion when necessary to make a decision on a claim for disability benefits; and

WHEREAS, section 3.159, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, requires Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care providers, under specified circumstances, to provide statements and medical opinions on conditions, employability and degree of disability; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy describes Disability Benefit Questionnaires (DBQ) as a documentation tool designed for easy use and provides a format for documenting medical evidence that aids Veterans Benefits Administration rating specialists in making decisions on claims; and

WHEREAS, it is also VHA policy that DBQs are intended for use by VHA primary care and specialty care providers, and VHA clinicians who are not disability examiners may complete DBQs; and

WHEREAS, the VA's continued mission is to be a provider of choice for enrolled veterans and delivering to them a comprehensive medical benefits package; and

WHEREAS, through education, training and experience, VA physicians gain special insight into the veterans' experience and specialized knowledge of the diseases and disabilities common to military service; and

WHEREAS, when VA physicians refuse to provide statements or opinions for veteran patients, those denials are inconsistent with the goal of the VHA to provide comprehensive care and place a serious burden on veterans who may not be able to afford a private medical opinion; and

WHEREAS, providing medical information for disability evaluations or examinations to support adjudication of claims remains inconsistent, because some local VA facilities' practices resist completing DBQs requested by claimants; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to develop and implement a consistent policy requiring VA health care practitioners to provide medical statements or opinions when requested by veterans in conjunction with claims for VA benefits.

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RESOLUTION NO. 35
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO INCLUDE 1151 PROTECTIONS UNDER
TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE, FOR VETERANS USING DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the primary care provider for millions of the nation's wartime and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, veterans, when receiving services at a VA medical facility or from a VA physician, are provided recourse when an additional disability or death is proximately due to or caused by such care is deemed to be negligent or careless; and

WHEREAS, compensation can be awarded if an additional disability or death of a veteran was caused by a VA employee's or facility's carelessness or negligence when providing hospital care, medical or surgical treatment, or examination; and

WHEREAS, veterans have increasing options to receive care in their local communities paid for by the VA including from providers who participate in the VA's community care network established under Public Law 115–182, the VA MISSION Act of 2018; and

WHEREAS, it is expected that the quality of care provided by the contracted non-VA medical facility or contracted non-VA physician would be as good or better than the care provided by the VA; and

WHEREAS, in the unfortunate circumstance that an additional disability or death occurs due to the carelessness, negligence, lack of proper skill or error of medical judgment of a community care provider's services, paid for by the VA, the veteran or their family would not have similar recourse as veterans receiving care within the VA under section 1151, title 38, United States Code; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that would afford veterans the same protection under section 1151, title 38, United States Code, if care rendered by a VA community care network provider (paid for by the VA), results in an additional disability or death of the veteran due to carelessness, negligence, lack of proper skill or error of medical judgment of said community care provider.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 36
ESTABLISH STUDIES ON THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF
EXPOSURE TO BISPHENOL A, A SUBSTANCE FOUND IN
PLASTIC DISPOSABLE WATER BOTTLES

WHEREAS, according to studies by the National Institute of Environmental Health, plastic disposable water bottles can leach bisphenol A (BPA) (also known as phthalates) from the plastic into the drinking water when exposed to extreme or moderate heat over time; and

WHEREAS, according to studies by Johns Hopkins University researcher Dr. Rolf Halden, chemicals called phthalates are "environmental contaminants that can exhibit hormone-like behavior by acting as endocrine disrupters in human and animals"; and

WHEREAS, studies reveal that heated plastics can increase the leaching of phthalates from containers into food or water, and studies further reveal that some of the common effects are cancers; and

WHEREAS, plastic disposable water bottles were used on a massive scale in Iraq, Afghanistan and other extreme temperature locations for active duty-personnel; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to allow for additional research and studies from the National

Academy of Sciences and/or other research facilities to determine the long-term health effects, to include cancers, of exposure to heated plastics and water bottles.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 39
SUPPORT ENHANCED MEDICAL SERVICES AND
BENEFITS FOR WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, the number of women serving in our military and veteran population continues to grow, with women now comprising 10% of all veterans and 17% of our active-duty service members; and

WHEREAS, women are now included in virtually all military occupations, including combat roles that expose them to the same injuries as their male peers; and

WHEREAS, the number of women veterans using Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care has doubled in the last decade, and women of recent service eras are younger, more likely to have service-connected conditions and more reliant upon VA health care; and

WHEREAS, 40% of women veteran users of VA care are under the age of 45 and therefore within their childbearing years, and their gender-specific needs often represent challenges to the current model and delivery of VA health care, which has traditionally focused on men; and

WHEREAS, significant numbers of women veterans, including those returning from current military deployments, are the primary or sole providers of dependent children, which can limit their ability to access services in inpatient, intensive outpatient or residential settings that have traditionally been available to address post-deployment mental health readjustment needs; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of women report military sexual trauma and domestic violence and need specialized mental health services from the VA; and

WHEREAS, the VA has too few proficient, knowledgeable health care providers with expertise in women's health, and many facilities fail to adequately address environment of care standards that ensure the safety, privacy and dignity of women patients; and

WHEREAS, many non-VA health providers in the VA's community care network, who fill gaps in critical gender-specific services for women veterans, including mammography, maternity care and gynecology, lack the training requirements to ensure they are meeting VA quality and care standards and waiting times; and

WHEREAS, the VA must improve outreach and services to meet the unique needs of women veterans who were catastrophically wounded, suffering amputations, blindness, spinal cord injury, post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, or who were sexually assaulted; and

WHEREAS, DAV's 2014 report, Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home, found that, despite a generous array of benefits to assist veterans with transition and readjustment following military service, serious gaps are evident for women in every aspect of existing federal programs; and

WHEREAS, DAV's 2018 report, Women Veterans: The Journey Ahead, found that the VA system still struggles to provide equitable access to women veterans, which requires adapting existing programs and facilities to meet their distinct needs in a culture that honors women's service and sacrifices and ensures that they feel safe and welcome; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks to ensure the provision of health care services and specialized programs, inclusive of gender-specific services, by the VA to eligible women veterans is provided to the same degree and extent that services are provided to eligible male veterans, inclusive of counseling and/or psychological services incident to combat exposure or sexual trauma; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to strictly adhere to stated policies regarding privacy and safety issues relating to the treatment of women veterans and to proactively conduct research and health studies as appropriate; periodically review, adjust and improve its women's health programs; and seek innovative methods to address barriers to care, thereby better ensuring women veterans receive the quality treatment and specialized services they so rightly deserve.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 40
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO GRANT THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT AND
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS THE PRIVILEGE TO USE THE VETERANS HEALTH
CARE SYSTEM AND TO RECEIVE THEIR CARE EXCLUSIVELY FROM THE
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, even though veterans health care is funded through an advance appropriation, it is still at the discretion of Congress to provide the level of funding necessary for the veterans health care system to meet the medical care needs of ill and injured veterans; and

WHEREAS, despite the increases in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system over the past decade, veterans often have difficulty accessing the care they need in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, the VA is recognized as the best health care system in the United States and for providing high-quality health care services; and

WHEREAS, by using the VA health care system, the President, Vice President and members of Congress would be in a better position to judge the resource needs of the VA to enable it to provide timely, high-quality health care to our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, similar to the members of the military, the President, Vice President and most members of Congress are required to spend a significant amount of time away from their homes, families and friends while Congress is in session; and

WHEREAS, because of the patriotism, devotion and sacrifices of our President, Vice President and members of Congress, ours is the most free nation on earth, where our citizens enjoy unequalled rights, privileges and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, the President, Vice President and members of Congress should therefore be granted the privilege of using the VA health care system for their health care needs; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to grant the President, Vice President and members of Congress the privilege to use the veterans health care system and to receive their care exclusively from the VA.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 41
PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE DENTAL CARE TO ALL
SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

WHEREAS, DAV recognizes that oral health is integral to the general health and well-being of a patient and is part of comprehensive health care; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system is mandated under section 1712, title 38, United States Code, to provide outpatient dental services to veterans rated 100% service connected, to veterans who were held as prisoners of war or to those who have sustained dental trauma in performance of military service; and

WHEREAS, irrespective of service-connected disability, section 1701(9), title 38, United States Code, defines "preventive health services" as a broad collection of VA health services that improve, protect and sustain the general health and well-being of veterans enrolled in VA health care, to include "such other health care services as the Secretary may determine to be necessary to provide effective and economical preventive health care"; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2000 report by the Surgeon General of the United States, Oral Health in America, individuals who are medically compromised or who have disabilities are at greater risk for oral diseases, and, in turn, oral diseases further jeopardize their health, and that oral diseases are progressive, cumulative and become more complex over time, and can affect economic productivity and compromise the ability to work, and often significantly diminish the quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the VA maintains oral and dental programs within its health care system; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide outpatient dental care to all enrolled service-connected disabled veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 42
ENSURE SUFFICIENT ACCESS TO CARE TO MEET THE HEALTH NEEDS OF
VETERANS RESIDING IN RURAL OR REMOTE AREAS

WHEREAS, 44% of active-duty service members identify rural or highly rural areas as their home of record, and 33% of all veterans enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) live in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, many rural areas are designated by the Health Resource Services Administration as Health Professional Shortage Areas for primary care, mental health and dental care or for any combination of these practice areas therein; and

WHEREAS, 56% of all rural veterans are enrolled in VHA, and rural veterans are older (57% of all enrolled rural veterans are elderly), poorer (52% are low income), sicker and less likely to have internet access (36% have no internet); and

WHEREAS, about half of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) community-based outpatient clinics are sited in rural areas; VA rural health and enterprise-wide initiatives have impacted close to a million veterans; VHA telehealth initiatives have served 84,500 enrolled veterans; and the VA's Office of Rural Health has funded 450 projects in rural areas, including broadband and transportation programs, and trained 1,400 medical students in rural health; and

WHEREAS, the VA's Office of Rural Health has identified strategies for improving health care for rural veterans, including identifying more opportunities to collaborate with government agencies such as the Health Services Research Administration and the Indian Health Service; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 115–182, the VA MISSION Act of 2018, includes access standards that will enable many rural veterans to use care from community partners which may not have the veteran-specific expertise to which VHA patients are accustomed; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, fully supports the right of rural veterans to be served by the VA to the maximum extent practicable, but urges the VA to develop training materials and conduct training and outreach to its community and federal partners in rural areas to ensure that these providers have understanding of veteran-specific exposures, risks and evidence-based practices to best address their needs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA continue to overcome barriers to care for rural veterans by continuing to improve access to telehealth initiatives and assisting veterans with transportation and travel.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 43
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO AUTHORIZE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NEW MENTAL
HEALTH PRACTITIONERS IN EXCHANGE FOR COMMITMENTS TO SERVE
VETERANS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FACILITIES

WHEREAS, the nation faces a looming shortage of practitioners in mental health, including physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists, social workers, mental health therapists and other counselors; and

WHEREAS, the needs of the newest generation of war veterans suffering the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health challenges, combined with the continuing mental health needs of older generations of veterans, may overwhelm the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) capacity to properly treat them with qualified providers so that they can recover from these illnesses; and

WHEREAS, after serving our nation, veterans should not see their health care needs neglected by the VA because they lack the capacity to serve them; and

WHEREAS, recent public laws have authorized the VA to expand the types and numbers of mental health and other services the VA must make available to veterans, their caregivers, dependents and survivors; and

WHEREAS, an existing scholarship program under chapter 76, title 38, United States Code, targeted to physicians, nurses and a variety of other health professions has been highly successful in recruiting new practitioners to VA careers and has expanded and improved care to wounded, injured and ill veterans; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of VA community-based outpatient clinics and Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Centers do not directly participate in the existing scholarship program as an aid to their local recruitment and employment efforts; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation or administrative policy changes in the existing scholarship program to make its benefits available more broadly within both the community-based outpatient clinics and Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Centers of the Department so that these facilities will be able to adequately meet the needs of veterans of all generations who need mental health services and psychological counseling to aid in their recoveries.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 44
SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF STELLATE GANGLION BLOCK RESEARCH
AND IMPLEMENTATION TO TREAT POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

WHEREAS, every June is designated as National Post-Traumatic Stress Awareness Month to help raise public awareness, reduce the associated stigma and help ensure that those individuals suffering from the invisible wounds of war promptly receive proper treatment; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that approximately 29%, 21% and 10% of service members and veterans that served in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom, the Persian Gulf War and the Vietnam War, respectively, have had post- traumatic stress (PTS) at the time of the study; and

WHEREAS, both government and nongovernmental organizations have made significant advances in the identification, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of PTS; and

WHEREAS, one of the most promising PTS treatments is stellate ganglion block (SGB), and the VA Long Beach Healthcare System in California and the VA Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI) are leading an effort to offer SGB to a subset of veterans who have not experienced relief from traditional PTS treatments; and

WHEREAS, there is growing evidence that SGB may alleviate certain PTS symptoms such as hyperarousal, exaggerated startle responses and anxiety; and it appears to calm an exaggerated “fight or flight” survival reflex in people living with PTS, which can become triggered by various events that do not warrant it; and veterans who received SGB for other health conditions like nerve pain report positive effects for their PTS symptoms, including reduced anxiety and hypervigilance; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the entire federal government to accelerate SGB research and that the VA advertise SGB in all VA facilities, and that the VA expand the CCI-led clinical demonstration nationwide.

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RESOLUTION NO. 55
IMPROVE THE CARE PROVIDED TO VETERANS WITH
SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES AFFECTING THE ABILITY TO
PROCREATE THROUGH ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

WHEREAS, during the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, reliance on dismounted patrols and frequent exposure to improvised explosive devices (IED) have significantly increased genitourinary (GU) trauma; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Theater Trauma Registry reports that the highest percentage of trauma admissions were GU injuries (the largest report of GU injuries during any military conflict), and of those, more than half of those injured were within childbearing age and were injured due to explosions; and

WHEREAS, sexual functioning can also be impaired by other physical, psychological and social factors that can diminish the quality of life of veterans or service members; and

WHEREAS, the DOD currently offers multiple assisted reproductive technology services for military service personnel who have lost procreative ability due to grave service-related illness or injury, to include those suffering neurological, physiological and/or anatomical loss; and

WHEREAS, emerging evidence suggests mental health conditions related to military service, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression, in addition to toxic exposures during military service, may be associated with infertility; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has based its guidance on providing assisted reproductive technology to gravely injured veterans or their legal different-sex spouses on DOD policy, which limits options available to many other veterans who have made great sacrifices in the protection of the nation; and

WHEREAS, veterans who, due to their military service, are unable to procreate and require reproductive assistance have already paid a price greater than any monetary assessment and have earned the right to have a family, and it is incumbent on the VA to make them whole to every extent possible; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that would include in the VA's health benefits package the use of assisted reproductive technologies for veterans who have lost the ability to procreate due to service-related injury or illness, including any conditions that may affect fertility that were not present prior to military service and regardless of marital status or the ability to furnish one's own genetic material.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 56
SUPPORT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL
AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, to restore the wounds and injuries, to maintain the health of veterans of prior conflicts, and to develop new treatments for veterans wounded and injured in today's and future conflicts, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research program provides a vital service and investment for veterans; and

WHEREAS, funded VA researchers are studying injuries and illnesses emanating from war, such as traumatic brain injury, burns, paralysis and amputations, and illnesses and diseases that disproportionately appear in the wartime veteran population, such as toxic environmental exposures, numerous organic illnesses, and post-traumatic stress disorder and other associated mental health sequela of war; and

WHEREAS, VA researchers have been recognized by multiple awards of Nobel Prizes, Lasker Awards (the "American Nobel Prize"), and many other public and private emblems of achievement for elevating the standards of health care not only for wounded and injured veterans but for people all around the world, including publication of tens of thousands of research developments in peer-reviewed medical literature; and

WHEREAS, VA researchers contribute directly to the health of veterans by serving as clinical providers in VA health care facilities and carry out important faculty and attending duties to sustain the VA's affiliations with the nation's schools of health professions, thereby elevating the standards of health care for all; and

WHEREAS, VA research is conducted only after rigorous scientific peer review, supervised by institutional review boards, and only in conformance with the Common Rule and other ethical and humanitarian constraints to ensure informed consent and safety of all research volunteers and the efficacy of approved research projects; and

WHEREAS, the VA's clinician-scientists in VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Service, who constitute the world's foremost scientists working in this field, invent and adapt specialized prosthetic, orthotic and other appliances, supports and treatments using numerous ground-breaking technologies to improve the lives of countless numbers of severely disabled veterans, including many members of DAV; and

WHEREAS, the annual VA Medical and Prosthetic Research appropriation constitutes less than 1% of the VA's health care budget, but research funding has been subjected to rescissions and does not generally keep pace with research inflation and uncontrollable costs; and

WHEREAS, the VA requires significant funding for repairs, restorations and replacements for VA's research laboratories, some of which involve life and safety risks for the VA employees and veteran volunteers; and

WHEREAS, significant investment in scientific computing including cloud storage and credits is integral to manipulate large databases to identify genomic patterns and other associations between veterans and health outcomes, including the effectiveness or adverse outcomes of particular treatments for a given population; and

WHEREAS, VA researchers have benefited from the richness of the electronic patient health record developed by VA clinicians for veterans and unique missions they serve and must preserve this unique resource as the VA undertakes a major modernization effort; and

WHEREAS, dedicated resources to the development, operations and maintenance of information technology proportional to the resources provided the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research budget is key to sustaining a robust and vital research program dedicated to the nation's veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, strongly supports the VA's Medical and Prosthetic Research program as a vital investment in the future, affecting wounded, injured and ill veterans, and urges the VA and Congress to adequately fund this program by ensuring there is adequate eradication of infrastructure and information technology deficits so that it may continue its remarkable traditions in helping veterans recover and rehabilitate, to improve the quality of their lives.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 57
ENSURE ADEQUATE STAFFING OF PATIENT ADVOCATES
IN THE VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has designated patient advocates at each Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center (VAMC) to receive and document feedback from veterans or their representatives, including requests for information, compliments and complaints, and assist with clinical appeals; and

WHEREAS, VHA provided limited guidance to VAMCs on the governance of patient advocacy programs, and its guidance, a program handbook, has been outdated since 2010; and

WHEREAS, VAMCs are still expected to follow the outdated handbook, which does not provide needed details on governance, such as specifying the VAMC department to which patient advocates should report; and

WHEREAS, the Government Accounting Office (GAO Report 18-356) review noted that the department to which patient advocates report can have a direct effect on the ability of staff to resolve veterans' complaints; and

WHEREAS, the lack of updated and complete guidance may impede the patient advocacy program from meeting its expectations to receive and address complaints from veterans in a convenient and timely manner; and

WHEREAS, VHA also has provided limited guidance to VAMCs on staffing levels for the patient advocacy program; and

WHEREAS, VHA's handbook states that every VAMC should have at least one patient advocate and appropriate support staff; however, it did not provide guidance on how to determine the number and type of staff needed; and

WHEREAS, the GAO's review stated that VHA's patient advocacy program staff had more work to do than they could realistically accomplish; and

WHEREAS, this limited guidance on staffing does not support good practices to ensure there are an appropriate number of patient advocates and support staff to address veterans' complaints in a timely manner; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports VAMC directors to ensure there is no fewer than one patient advocate for every 13,500 veterans enrolled and/or what is adequate and balanced to address all the needs of veterans in the VA health care system; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports the need for highly rural veterans to have access to the services of patient advocates assigned to rural community-based outpatient clinics.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 58
SUPPORT EQUITY IN ACCESS TO SERVICES AND BENEFITS FOR RACIAL
AND ETHNIC MINORITY SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS

WHEREAS, veterans from minority or ethnic backgrounds are expected to comprise an increasingly large proportion of the veterans population growing from 23.5% in 2014 to 36% by 2043; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has been unable to provide data to demonstrate equity of access to benefits and services among racial and ethnic veterans and has not implemented repeated recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans to make such data available; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has identified higher rates of service connection and higher utilization of mental health and substance use disorder services among minority veterans; more research is needed to understand disparate patterns of diagnosed condition rates between whites and minority veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA has been successful in reducing disparities in some care outcomes; it finds that disparities are often the result of social and behavioral determinants of health, including financial and nonfinancial barriers to care; remain; and often result in adverse health outcomes; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges VBA to routinely report data on numbers of applications, utilization and completion of programs for veterans by racial and ethnic background and gender; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue identifying and addressing social and behavioral determinants that may affect health outcomes in addition to barriers to health care for all service-connected veterans by minority and ethnic groups.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 059
ENCOURAGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO SUBMIT
CANDIDATES FOR THE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

WHEREAS, DAV created the Volunteer of the Year award program as a means to recruit, retain and recognize volunteers who serve disabled veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities and the local community; and

WHEREAS, the Volunteer of the Year award annually recognizes the remarkable efforts of an outstanding member of DAV and the Auxiliary who willingly donate their time and energy to disabled veterans in VA Voluntary Service programs; and

WHEREAS, at the beginning of each calendar year, DAV solicits every VA Voluntary Service program manager to nominate one deserving member of DAV and the Auxiliary from their facility in order to be considered for the Volunteer of the Year award, with little response; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, strongly encourages each Voluntary Service program manager at every VA medical facility to submit the name of a deserving member of DAV and the Auxiliary to be considered for this prestigious award in appreciation of their dedication and service to America's veterans through their voluntary service efforts.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 91
PROVIDE AUTHORIZATION FOR DAV TO ACT IN SUPPORT OF, OR IN
OPPOSITION TO, LEGISLATIVE ISSUES CONCERNING RESEARCH
CONDUCTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conducts extensive amounts of medical research covering an extensive variety of subjects; and

WHEREAS, VA's research is generalizable to other populations who benefit; and

WHEREAS, Congress periodically has proposed legislation that impacts VA's research; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, proposes that DAV's national legislative staff be given the dexterity and leeway to engage in support of, or in opposition to, any legislative matters that may pertain to expanding, restricting, or otherwise involving VA's ability to continue being a leader in the field of research.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 92
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ALLOW APPEALS RELATED
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VETERANS HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) regulations currently recognize and allow for access to community care in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) is given the ability to review all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) decisions other than those that involve a medical opinion; and

WHEREAS, Congress has specifically declared that the review of Community Care decisions shall be subject to the VHA's clinical appeals process, but such decisions may not be appealed to the Board; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, proposes that DAV's national legislative staff be authorized to actively pursue the

expansion of the right to appeal to include the non-clinical Community Care decisions (i.e., those based on any reason other than a legitimate medical opinion by a medical provider).

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 93
SUPPORT LEGISLATION DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS TO RESEARCH AND MAKE AVAILABLE PSYCHEDELIC COMPOUNDS
FOR TREATING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

WHEREAS, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a condition afflicting millions of veterans of all eras; and

WHEREAS, the symptoms of PTSD may inhibit everyday activities, such as working and maintaining relationships; and

WHEREAS, current treatments have not brought sufficient relief to the thousands of veterans receiving PTSD and traumatic brain injury treatment; and

WHEREAS, the only Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medications for the treatment of PTSD are the selective reuptake inhibitors sertraline and paroxetine, which were approved 20 years ago; and

WHEREAS, all other medicines used to treat PTSD are prescribed “off-label” for a condition that has not been officially approved; and

WHEREAS, MDMA-assisted psychotherapy has shown, in preliminary studies, to significantly reduce PTSD symptoms of those who participated in the studies; and

WHEREAS, the FDA has granted breakthrough status to MDMA and Psilocybin for PTSD and depression, respectively, expediting pharmaceutical development and review; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the first studies researching psychedelic compounds for the first time in 60 years to investigate the effects and potential benefits of MDMA and psilocybin on veterans; and

WHEREAS, former service members have traveled abroad for psychedelic treatments currently deemed dangerous and ineffective by the United States and have received relief; and

WHEREAS, the psychedelic compound ibogaine has been shown to effectively treat traumatic brain injury in special operations military veterans in a Stanford Medicine study conducted in Mexico; and

WHEREAS, although preliminary research is promising in treating several wartime services disabled mental health conditions, more research is needed to determine the efficacy and safety of psychedelic compounds; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation directing the VA to research and make available psychedelic compounds for treating mental health conditions and traumatic brain injury.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 94
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE AND INSTITUTE HEALTH CARE
INITIATIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

WHEREAS, active duty service members suffer many injuries, illnesses and diseases and many will be eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and health care after service; and

WHEREAS, Department of Defense (DOD) research and new treatments can provide improvement in health outcomes and play a role in transitioning to VA health care; and

WHEREAS, DOD is providing new initiatives in treatment for a variety of conditions, including traumatic brain injuries, mental health, toxic exposures and prosthetics; and

WHEREAS, these DOD ingenuities play a pivotal role in long-term health care once service members become veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that will improve DOD health care initiatives that will impact future service-disabled veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 95
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXPAND THE CURRENT VETERANS
AFFAIRS FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the Foreign Medical Program does not currently provide reimbursement for travel or lodging for service-connected veterans requiring treatment that is not available within a reasonable distance or time, from their domicile to another foreign country that can only be provided the medical treatment necessary; and

WHEREAS, qualified service-connected veterans enrolled in the Foreign Medical Program require transportation and lodging during treatment of certain service-connected conditions such as multiple dose cancer treatments and surgical outpatient procedures requiring recovery periods greater than 24 hours before return travel to their place of dwelling can be accomplished; and

WHEREAS, certain service-connected veterans require comprehensive caregiver support to aid with activities of daily living, thus travel and lodging expenses for the caregiver also be reimbursed; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to provide travel and lodging reimbursement to service-connected disabled veterans enrolled in the Foreign Medical Program and, when appropriate, their caregivers, for treatment of service-connected conditions requiring extended medical care or untimeliness of treatment, to include treatment of cancer and surgical procedures requiring recovery periods greater than 24 hours.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 96
ENHANCE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CAREGIVER RULE

WHEREAS, veterans who are permanently and totally disabled and receive compensation often encounter difficulties in maintaining their household due to physical limitations and lack of familial support; and

WHEREAS, many veterans reside in permanent living situations that may be contraindicated for their total well-being and safety, exacerbating the challenges they face in performing essential household chores; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative to expand support services to ensure that these veterans receive adequate assistance with their daily tasks, thereby enhancing their quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the current Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Caregiver Rule does not include provisions for nonfamilial caregivers for disabled veterans receiving compensation; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, that the VA should shall enhance the Caregiver Rule to include eligibility for nonfamilial caregivers for veterans who are permanently and totally disabled, receive compensation, and reside in permanent living situations that are contraindicated for their total wellbeing and safety; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that eligible veterans under this enhancement shall be provided with a nonfamilial caregiver to assist with labor-intensive household chores, including but not limited to laundry, cleaning, and yard work; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA establish clear guidelines and procedures for determining eligibility, assessing the need for caregiver assistance, and assigning appropriate nonfamilial caregivers; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA ensure that nonfamilial caregivers receive adequate training, support, and compensation for their services, commensurate with the level of care required; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA prioritize prompt implementation of this enhancement to ensure timely assistance for eligible veterans in need; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA regularly review and assess the effectiveness of this enhancement in meeting the needs of disabled veterans and their nonfamilial caregivers and adjust, as necessary.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 97
SUPPORT TRANSFERRING VETERANS' MEDICAL RECORDS
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO THE DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SYSTEM AUTOMATICALLY

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) uses the veteran's social security number and DD-214 to register the veteran in its system; and

WHEREAS, the VA would be the central location to accept transitioning medical records from the Department of Defense (DOD); and

WHEREAS, the veteran's choice of home station locale allows them to select from which VA medical center (VAMC) to seek care; and

WHEREAS, VA and DOD medical records platforms have interface capability; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, that all veterans have VAMC access by virtue of automatically transferring medical records from DOD to VA without having to register/in-process the VAMC as they transition out of the military.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 119
SUPPORT A MORE LIBERAL REVIEW OF OTHER THAN HONORABLE
DISCHARGES IN CASES OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER,
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY, MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA AND OTHER
TRAUMA FOR THE PURPOSE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS AND SERVICES

WHEREAS, former service members who receive a nonpunitive administrative discharge characterized as other than honorable ("bad paper") are generally not considered eligible for care and treatment from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) or other Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits; and

WHEREAS, the current rate of bad paper discharges by Afghanistan and Iraq service members with undiagnosed traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), military sexual trauma (MST) and other trauma are twice that during the Vietnam era and nearly four times the rate of veterans during the World War II era; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the Secretary of Defense provided policy guidance to the Military Department Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NR) to give "liberal consideration" in examining requests for discharge upgrades to evidence that PTSD may have contributed to the misconduct leading to less than honorable discharges; and

WHEREAS, former service members who have potentially suffered TBI, PTSD, MST or other trauma and are awarded bad paper discharges are likely to need medical care and benefits related to their military service; and

WHEREAS, without access to VA medical care and benefits, these former service members may be at higher risk of suicide and homelessness, along with involvement in the criminal justice system; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a more liberal review of other than honorable discharges for purposes of receiving VA benefits and health care services in cases of former service members whose PTSD, TBI, MST or other trauma contributed to their administrative discharges characterized as other than honorable.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 168
SUPPORT EFFECTIVE CARE FOR VETERANS WITH DEMENTIA
WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) faces a large and growing number of veterans with dementia, including Alzheimer's disease and other organic diseases of the brain; the VA has estimated 451,000 veterans are living with Alzheimer's dementia and has projected the number of veterans living with Alzheimer's dementia will increase by 8.4% in 2033 to more than 488,000; and

WHEREAS, the risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia is higher for populations in the VA that are already at risk for certain adverse health outcomes, including women, African Americans and those of Hispanic ethnicity, than white individual populations; and

WHEREAS, research shows that military-related exposures such as traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as depression, are linked to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, and the VA estimates that as many as a quarter of new cases of dementia may be associated with these military exposures; and

WHEREAS, advanced age also disproportionately affects veterans' risk for developing dementia; and WHEREAS, dementia is a chronic and incurable condition, costing the VA three times more than the average patient; and

WHEREAS, dementia impairs key executive functions, such as memory and cognition, including language, insight, judgment and ability to plan; diminishes the ability for self-care; triggers behavioral and psychological problems; and creates a heavy burden on caregivers; and

WHEREAS, dementia is difficult to diagnose and is often missed by clinicians, and there are high levels of off-label use of antipsychotic medications, particularly in institutional settings, that may be inappropriate or even harmful for patients with dementia; and

WHEREAS, a team approach to supporting family caregivers of dementia patients by assisting them with navigating the VA's complex array of health care and financial benefits, coaching them on effective approaches to managing challenging behaviors, diversional activities and nonverbal communication has proven more effective than off-label use of antipsychotic medication; and

WHEREAS, lifestyle changes that have been proven to delay or prevent disease for as many as a quarter of veterans with cognitive impairment; and

WHEREAS, the VA's Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM) teams, which include a memory care coordinator, may assist family caregivers with education about VA services, patient health and wellness, patient safety, and making legal and care plans for the future; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, urges the VA to increase support and resources for improved dementia care and programming, including GEMs with a dedicated memory care coordinator at each VA medical center.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 169
URGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PROVIDE PROMPT
SCREENING AND TREATMENT FOR VETERANS EXPOSED TO DEPLETED
URANIUM AND SUPPORT ADDITIONAL RESEARCH INTO THE LONG-TERM
HEALTH EFFECTS OF SUCH EXPOSURE

WHEREAS, the military utilized the extreme density of depleted uranium in projectiles and tank armor during the Persian Gulf War, Bosnia, and in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF); and

WHEREAS, exposure to the heavy metal depleted uranium as a result of friendly-fire incidents, cleanup and salvage operations, and proximity to burning tanks and ammunition containing depleted uranium, poses hazards, including chemical toxicity to humans when internalized through ingestion inhalation, shrapnel and contaminated wounds; and

WHEREAS, millions of service members have deployed to the Southwest Asia theater of operations, and in support of OIF/OEF, and the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Depleted Uranium Program, established in 1993, has assessed several thousands of veterans have been exposed to depleted uranium; and

WHEREAS, during the Gulf War, service members experience "level 1" exposure (the highest of three exposure categories as classified by the Department of Defense (DOD)) through wounds caused by depleted uranium fragments, inhalation of airborne depleted uranium, particles, ingestion of depleted uranium residues or wound contamination by depleted uranium residues; and

WHEREAS, hundreds or thousands more may have been exposed to lower exposure through inhalation of dust containing depleted uranium particles and residue or ingestion from hand-to- mouth contact or contamination of clothing; and

WHEREAS, questions remain regarding testing processes used by the DOD and VA; veterans who served in OIF had confirmed depleted uranium detected in their urine, and all had depleted uranium embedded fragments or fragment injuries; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee, mandated by Congress to examine scientific and medical literature on the potential health effects of chemical, biological and

radiological agents, could not determine the likelihood of increased risk of adverse health outcomes among Gulf War veterans due to exposure to the agents examined in its 2000 report, due to the lack of exposure data; and

WHEREAS, the IOM Committee in its 2008 updated scientific and medical literature review regarding exposure to depleted uranium and long-term human health outcomes assigned a high priority to continue monitoring a possible association between exposure and several diseases and conditions; and

WHEREAS, the VA Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses recognized the limited number of research projects to examine the impact of the total exposures and experience of deployment and war on veterans' health; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to provide prompt medical screening and treatment to any veteran that may have been exposed to depleted uranium; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports additional research to examine the health effects of exposure to depleted uranium.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 170
EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO
PROVIDE HOSPITAL CARE, MEDICAL SERVICES AND NURSING HOME CARE
TO ALL VETERANS OF THE KOREAN CONFLICT

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996 to exempt veterans from the Mexican border period or World War I from having to meet requirements in order to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical benefits; and

WHEREAS, more than 25% of the living veterans from World War II and the Korean War are not using the medical benefits they have earned because they are not deemed eligible by the VA; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 104-262 requires 0% service-connected disabled veterans to be means (income) tested in order to receive treatment by the VA at their medical facilities; and

WHEREAS, according to statistics proved by the VA, a total of 234 World War II veterans pass away on a daily basis and only 167,284 of these veterans are still alive; and

WHEREAS, the DAV, at its 2018 National Convention, has previously gone on record supporting “the exclusion of service-connected disabled veterans from the requirement of means (income) testing for treatment or service received at VA medical facilities;” NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1710(a)(2)(E) by adding the words “or World War II; or Korean Conflict.”

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RESOLUTION NO. 171
ENSURE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS RESEARCH TO IMPROVE CARE AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS
EXPOSED TO MILITARY TOXIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

WHEREAS, veterans of all military conflicts from the world wars to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been exposed to environmental hazards and man-made toxins, including cold and other adverse weather conditions; mustard gas; herbicides; pesticides; chemical, biological and radiological agents; “burn pits”; and other combat and military occupational exposures; and

WHEREAS, returning from war, some veterans subsequently suffer disabling conditions and symptoms of illnesses that may be difficult to medically diagnose and not be immediately identified as consequential to such dangerous exposures; and

WHEREAS, research conducted by the National Institutes of Health, the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Veterans Affairs (VA), and other federal departments and agencies has focused on associations linking toxic and environmental exposures with subsequent health status of veterans (and in the case of Vietnam veterans, some of their children); and

WHEREAS, sustained funding for such research is necessary to ensure veterans receive high-quality health care services and adequate compensatory benefits to which they are entitled due to diseases or injuries incurred from hazardous military exposures; and

WHEREAS, in studies mandated by Congress in public law, the National Academy of Sciences continues to review and evaluate scientific literature to determine whether associations exist that connect a variety of military exposures and certain physical disorders within populations of veterans; and

WHEREAS, effective evidence-based medicine to treat individual patients with acute or chronic diseases must rely on scientifically valid biomedical research and peer-reviewed literature; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to actively oversee its established mechanism of delegation to the National Academy of Sciences and the VA to determine validations of, and develop equitable compensation policy for, environmentally exposed veterans; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to provide adequate funding for research to identify all disabling conditions and effective screening and treatment for such disabilities that may have been caused by exposure to environmental hazards and man-made toxins while individuals served in the armed forces of the United States; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges greater collaboration between the DOD and VA to share necessary deployment, health and exposure data from military operations and deployments, in order to timely and adequately address the subsequent health concerns of disabled veterans, whatever the causes of those disabilities; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV intends to closely monitor programs of care within the Veterans Health Administration to ensure veterans disabled by exposure to environmental hazards and man-made toxins receive effective, high-quality health care and that the biomedical research and development programs of the Department are fully addressing their needs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 175
SUPPORT CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING FOR THE CREATION
OF A DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NATIONAL
REHABILITATIVE SPECIAL EVENTS OFFICE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and several congressionally chartered veterans service organizations co-sponsor national rehabilitative special event programs for veterans receiving health care from VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, the VA currently has a program within the Office of Public Affairs tasked with oversight of the national rehabilitative special events; and

WHEREAS, these rehabilitative programs, which include the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, National Veterans Wheelchair Games, National Veterans Golden Age Games, National Creative Arts Festival and the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, focus on rehabilitation of many severely disabled veterans, and as such, these events should be the responsibility of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), not the Office of Public Affairs; and

WHEREAS, while these programs showcase the preventive and therapeutic values of sports, fitness and recreation, which are key factors in VA's extensive rehabilitation programs, they are also beneficial to veterans, helping many to overcome or mitigate the physical and emotional impact of severe disabilities; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to create an office within the VHA to oversee these rehabilitative special events; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA will appropriate a budget for the national rehabilitative special events office to its operational needs; AND

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RESOLUTION NO. 176
ENSURE PROTECTION AND EXPANSION OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION PATIENTS

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) integrated health care systems, includes 171 medical centers, over 1,400 community-based outpatient clinics, community living centers, Vet Centers, and Domiciliaries; and

WHEREAS, comprehensive care is provided to over 9.1 million veterans each year by the collective effort of these health care facilities; and the more than 53,000 independent licensed health care practitioners who work within them; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will provide veterans with personalized, patient-driven, compassionate, state-of-the-art care; and make veterans experience as positive and pleasant as VA can; and

WHEREAS, the veterans will be treated with dignity, compassion, respect and will not be subject to discrimination for any reason, including for reasons of age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression; and consistent with Federal law, VA policy, and accreditation standards of The Joint Commission; and

WHEREAS, the VHA sets forth the policy and responsibilities for handling clinical appeals for program specific considerations for community care, caregivers, dental care, transgender and women's health; and

WHEREAS, many veterans receive care in both community settings and the VA; and

WHEREAS, the primary reasons veterans reported for using both VA and community care were (1) for convenience, (2) to access needed services, and (3) to get a second opinion; and

WHEREAS, patients seeking a second opinion seek to gain more information or reassurance about their diagnosis or treatment; and

WHEREAS, while many second opinions confirm the original diagnosis or treatment, discrepancies in opinions had a potential major impact on patient outcomes in up to 58% of cases; and

WHEREAS, the patient's bill of rights does not specifically address nor support the process of second opinions for VA direct care or community care network; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to update the patient's bill of rights to allow veterans and any person the veteran chooses to be involved in all decisions about the veteran's care to being able to exercise the right to a second opinion; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, upon request for a second opinion, a referral must be made available to another provider and, if the facility does not have an additional clinician, then referral should be made to the community care network; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all costs related to obtaining the second opinion, including travel reimbursements for the veteran, be paid in full by the VA.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 177

SUPPORT CHANGES TO HIGHLY RURAL TRANSIT GRANT REQUIREMENTS

WHEREAS, the current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy states that a veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met. The veteran:

- Have a service-connected rating of 30% or more.
- Are traveling for treatment of a service-connected condition.
- Receive a VA pension, or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension.
- Are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension exam.
- Have vision impairment, spinal cord injury or disorder, double or multiple amputation, enrollment in VA Rehab Programs.

WHEREAS, the VA has modified where medical treatment can be provided based on distance from a VA medical facility; and

WHEREAS, in rural areas, there has been no subsequent adjustment in travel for medical care at the VA, community-based outpatient clinic or care in the community; and

WHEREAS, service-connected veterans below 30% disability deserve the right to transportation for medical care as those that are service connected at 30% or more; and

WHEREAS, it has been shown that the current transportation system has proven to be almost non-effective in rural areas (and some urban areas); and

WHEREAS, there are shortages of volunteer drivers, inadequate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant VA vans (for mobility impaired/handicapped) and too few VA VTS vehicles; and

WHEREAS, over 75% of ridership in urban areas, is on VA Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) vehicles and only 25% by DAV vans, that are non-ADA compliant in rural areas; and and

WHEREAS, early prevention and intervention could improve the veteran's medical outcomes, by having access to timely access VA health care system ; and

WHEREAS, allowing service-connected disabled veterans to be more proactive on their care will allow the VA medical team to catch medical issues before they become more serious; and

WHEREAS, in rural areas, travel cost is prohibitive; and

WHEREAS, the current VA transportation system does not work in rural areas. The VA transportation system does not meet the requirements of the ADA.

WHEREAS in rural areas most volunteer drivers are over the age of 65 and are not trained to handle medical emergencies; and

WHEREAS, due to age, volunteer drivers are physically incapable of rendering medical assistance, and

WHEREAS, the veterans being transported are more likely in a higher risk category and the VA vans are not equipped with AED's; and

WHEREAS, in rural areas, VTS transportation trips cannot be in excess of over 250 miles round trip and in excess of 8 hours; and

WHEREAS, veterans that are less than 30% service-connected disabled who live in rural areas are not reimbursed for travel; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, that the current VA policy be modified and expand the definitions of eligibility to transportation and travel reimbursement needs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED "A veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met:

- Have a service-connected (SC) rating of 0 percent or more,
- Receive a VA pension, or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, Are traveling for a scheduled compensation of pension, or if not otherwise eligible as noted above
- Are traveling for treatment for a treatment approved and scheduled by the VA at a VA medical facility, a CBOC, or an approved Care in the Community appointment; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VA must look to partner with local community (public and private) or regional transportation systems, to include which ADA compliant modes of transportation.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 193 SUPPORT MODERNIZING DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) primary mission is to meet the needs of ill, injured and disabled veterans through inpatient hospital care, outpatient primary and specialty care, and long-term care, which is best accomplished through facilities operated by the VA for the exclusive benefit of veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the United States, with over 9 million enrolled veterans, and annually provides medical care to over 7 million veteran users; and

WHEREAS, the VA operates over 172 medical centers (VAMCs), almost 1,130 community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), over 100 nursing homes known as "community living centers" (CLCs), over 300 readjustment counseling "Vet Centers" and other facilities that deliver health care to veterans; and

WHEREAS, the majority of the VA's medical centers are over 60 years old and were designed and built under an outmoded model of health care delivery based on centralized hospital inpatient episodes of care; and

WHEREAS, the VA must continue modernizing its health care system to meet veterans' current and future health care needs, enhance access to its system of care, and optimize its use of federal resources; and

WHEREAS, the VA's Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) program estimates it could require \$70 billion over the next 10 years to maintain VA's existing health care facilities and expand capacity to meet rising demand for care; and

WHEREAS, there has been a consistent pattern over many years of the VA requesting, and Congress appropriating, far less than the level of funding required to maintain the VA's health care infrastructure based on SCIP estimates; and

WHEREAS, the current budget and appropriations process is not conducive to fully funding the VA's health care infrastructure needs; and

WHEREAS, congressional budget rules have made it difficult to renew or sign new leases for CBOCs, thereby threatening the VA's timely delivery of health care; and

WHEREAS, the VA needs to assess all its health care facilities and develop a plan to strengthen, expand and realign them to more effectively deliver health care in the future; and

WHEREAS, the VA will only be successful if it develops a long-term infrastructure plan in consultation and collaboration with veterans service organization (VSO) stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, there is a history of ineffective VA management and congressional oversight of VA health care construction projects that requires fundamental reforms to streamline the approval, management and oversight processes; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports modernization of the VA's health care infrastructure and urges the VA to request, and Congress to approve, at minimum the level of infrastructure funding the VA's SCIP process estimates is required; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should carefully monitor any proposed changes in the VA's infrastructure that could jeopardize the VA's ability to meet veterans' needs for primary and specialized VA health care and rehabilitative services or that would threaten the VA's medical education, biomedical research or national emergency missions; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA must develop a long-term infrastructure plan in consultation with VSOs that ensures the VA remains the primary provider and the coordinator of care for enrolled veterans; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should examine new models for funding VA infrastructure to guarantee that adequate funding is readily available to maintain existing and build new health care facilities; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA and Congress should reform and streamline the approval, management and oversight of construction projects to more quickly deliver health care facilities and more efficiently use appropriated funding.

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RESOLUTION NO. 194

ENSURE A SAFE, SECURE AND EFFECTIVE ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD FOR VETERANS THAT ALLOWS THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO FULFILL CORE MISSIONS OF PATIENT CARE, RESEARCH AND TRAINING

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is engaged in a multibillion-dollar, decadelong rollout of an "off-the shelf" electronic health record through Cerner Corporation that is interoperable with military, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and some private sector health records, which will largely replace the Veterans Health Information and Technology Architecture (VistA) and its current computerized patient record; and

WHEREAS, interoperability with its community care providers, including its academic affiliates and partners in military treatment facilities, has been a longtime goal of the VA allowing it to become more integrated with its increasingly diverse network of federal and community health care providers by allowing more timely referrals, transfer of medical records, diagnostic and laboratory testing, pharmaceutical data and billing information; and

WHEREAS, another goal of the modernization project is to create a longitudinal patient record for the veterans, which incorporates military records including exposures and medical records during service; and

WHEREAS, veterans and their families would benefit from better means to schedule their own appointments and access to real-time information about their health in a timely and secure manner; and

WHEREAS, the VA has experienced significant challenges in the initial phases of the rollout—patients have been endangered because the new records do not accurately capture data about prescribed medication and other key data—and the difficulty of implementing the new record is causing staff fatigue and low morale at the pilot site in Spokane; and

WHEREAS, VA researchers have expressed concerns about losing access to the richness of the data captured in the VA's computerized medical record, which has allowed them to identify and explore unique issues and trends in veterans' health; and

WHEREAS, recent reports indicate the VA must improve cybersecurity to ensure veterans' private health and data are protected from illicit use; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges caution in ensuring that the VA's new information technology architecture allows it to fulfill all of its core missions—maintaining patient safety should be the foremost concern as the system is updated, but adequate staff support and training is also critical at this juncture; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the VA must continue its modernization effort in a manner that ensures personal data is secure but accessible to veterans to allow them to be partners in their health care.

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**RESOLUTION NO. 195
OPPOSE RECOVERY OF THIRD-PARTY PAYMENTS
FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES**

WHEREAS, the primary mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is to provide high-quality medical care to veterans eligible by reason of their service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the VA is authorized to recover or collect the cost of care from third-party health insurers when insured veterans receive health care from the VA for nonservice-connected conditions; and

WHEREAS, the collection of payments from third parties for the treatment of veterans' service-connected disabilities would abrogate the VA's and the federal government's responsibility to provide such care and may result in increased premium payments by veterans; and

WHEREAS, to improve its ability to generate revenue on the backs of service-connected disabled veterans, some continue to propose implementing a policy to eliminate the current practice of first applying third-party payments to offset veterans' copayment debts; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any legislation that would require the VA to recover third-party payments for the care and treatment of a veteran's service-connected disabilities.

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**RESOLUTION NO. 196
SUPPORT EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WORKFORCE**

WHEREAS, staffing shortages and vacancies at every level of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system and across numerous critical positions impedes service-connected disabled veterans who rely on VA to receive timely, high-quality, veteran-centric medical care; and

WHEREAS, the VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) annually determines and reports on clinical and nonclinical occupations shortages within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); and

WHEREAS, the VA OIG's report for fiscal year (FY) 2022 (IG Report 22-00722-187) indicates that every VA medical center surveyed reported at least one severe staffing shortage; and

WHEREAS, the two most common critical occupation shortages identified for FY 2022 are medical officers and nurse occupations; and

WHEREAS, the remaining clinical shortages are practical nurses, psychologists, psychiatry service, medical technologists and primary care positions; and

WHEREAS, shortages in nonclinical personnel such as custodians, medical support assistants, police officers, food service and general engineers may also affect operations; and

WHEREAS, health care professionals undergoing separation from the armed services are aware of many of the particular health care challenges of veterans and have worked within a large federal health care system; and

WHEREAS, there is a nationwide shortage of qualified doctors, nurses and specialists particularly in rural areas because the VA must compete with other health care providers to recruit and retain the best and brightest clinical staff, and the federal hiring process for clinical staff remains lengthy and convoluted; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a simple-to-administer alternative VHA personnel system, in law and regulation, which governs all VHA employees, applies best practices from the private sector to human capital management, and supports pay and benefits that are competitive with the private sector; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to consider campaigns to target service members in health care and other appropriate occupations separating from the military and develop systems for expedited hiring and credentialing to onboard them.

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RESOLUTION NO. 197
SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS IN PROVIDER TRAINING AND BENEFICIARY
TRAVEL BENEFITS FOR VETERANS SEEKING SPECIALIZED TREATMENT
PROGRAMS AND CARE FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) reported an increase of 1% with service members who experienced sexual assault in fiscal year (FY) 2022 from 2021; and

WHEREAS, the growing prevalence of sexual assault in the military is alarming and often results in lingering physical, emotional or chronic psychological symptoms in assault survivors; and

WHEREAS, both women and men enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system report they had experienced military sexual trauma (MST); and

WHEREAS, each VA medical center has an MST coordinator who can assist veterans in identifying specialized residential and outpatient counseling programs and evidence-based treatments for MST survivors within VA medical centers, clinics and Vet Centers—regional offices also have an MST outreach coordinator to assist survivors with filing claims for conditions related to MST; and

WHEREAS, based on VA clinical determinations, some veterans request or are referred to VA medical facilities other than their local facilities or closest Veterans Integrated Service Network to receive the specialized care they need; and

WHEREAS, the VA's current policy in beneficiary travel permits reimbursement to a veteran only from a veteran's home of record to the nearest VA facility by road mileage, whether or not that facility possesses the expertise needed for a particular type of care, including inpatient and residential treatment for MST-related needs; and

WHEREAS, if a VA clinician determines an MST survivor needs specialized care from a VA MST inpatient facility, the VA's beneficiary travel policy may serve to obstruct access to that resource or force an MST survivor to self-pay travel costs in order to gain access to these specialized services; and

WHEREAS, evidence-based treatment practices known to successfully treat veterans with MST-related mental health conditions are available but not systemically used by all providers treating these patients; and

WHEREAS, the VA offers MST-related training and has produced clinical practice guidelines and formulated evidence-based treatments and states that its mental health providers who treat MST survivors complete specialized training to treat such patients; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on the VA to authorize beneficiary travel to distant VA medical centers for veterans seeking specialized MST care; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls upon Congress to grant authority for beneficiary travel to Vet Centers for such purposes, to ensure all MST survivors gain access to the specialized treatment programs and services they need to fully recover from sexual trauma that occurred in military service and are enabled to choose gender-exclusive treatment options, including their preferred sex of provider, to the maximum extent possible; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports legislation to require all VA providers offering MST-related treatment, in addition to providers in the Veterans Community Care Program offering such care, to receive specialized training in addressing the needs of individuals who have experienced sexual assault; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to continually improve its MST treatment programs and ensure dissemination of MST evidence-based clinical practice guidelines throughout the VA health care system.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 208
SUPPORT AND ENHANCE MATERNITY CARE COORDINATION

WHEREAS, maternity services covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs include full exams and lab tests, neonatal education and screenings, obstetrical ultrasounds, genetics testing and specialty consults, prescription drugs, labor and delivery, lactation support, social work, mental health, and maternal care up to 12 months postpartum; and

WHEREAS, a Maternity Care Coordinator can assist women veterans coordinate their care and other health care needs to include specialty care needs during their pregnancy to community care network; and

WHEREAS, it is common health care knowledge that various health care problems such as congenital birth defects, adverse enzymatic reactions, pulmonary and cardiac issues, many do not manifest themselves in the first 7 days of life; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the provision of pediatric healthcare for newborns of female veterans until they are 12 months old, enabling access to federal and state programs for comprehensive and coordinated services for them, their mothers, and their families.

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RESOLUTION NO. 210
SUPPORT THE RETURN OF CHECK-IN/TRAVEL CLAIM KIOSKS
TO ALL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HOSPITALS,
CLINICS AND MEDICAL BUILDINGS

WHEREAS, in November 2020, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) transitioned from travel reimbursement kiosk machines located at VA medical facilities to the beneficiary travel self-service system (BTSSS) computer-based program nationwide; and

WHEREAS, BTSSS, a web-based system created in September 2016, was intended to automate the travel reimbursement claims process, reduce long-term costs, and decrease the risk of improper payments; and

WHEREAS, veterans were required to utilize the new travel reimbursement website; and

WHEREAS, despite the new program and the hope for a more streamlined process, the changes failed to meet intended goals, resulting in veterans experiencing slow claims processing; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Inspector General attributes the Department's goal of veteran utilization of the new system falling far short due to the lack of solicitation of feedback from veterans and veterans service organizations prior to implementation; and

WHEREAS, not all veterans have access to personal computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, or adequate bandwidth at home and many veterans do not have familiarity or are uncomfortable with using online web-based technology; and

WHEREAS, not getting reimbursed puts a financial burden on a demographic that is already often financially challenged; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, requests that VA reinstall kiosks at all medical locations to alleviate the barriers and delay in time to receiving the travel reimbursements that they are qualified to receive.

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RESOLUTION NO. 211
ENSURE ALL VETERANS HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, many times a service member that is leaving the military goes from full medical support to no medical care at all; and

WHEREAS, having the right to continue receiving medical care, even for a limited amount of time, will assist in the transition to private life; and

WHEREAS, without this care, many veterans will fall through the cracks in our country's safety net, which adds to the mental health issues they already face; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, support that all military service personnel with an honorable discharge be eligible to receive their health care through the VA immediately after discharge from service

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, if necessary serve member has exceeds the means testing, there could be reasonable co-pays applied.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 212
SUPPORT STANDARDIZED TESTING FOR OVARIAN CANCER

WHEREAS, currently, within standard medical practice, testing for a variety of ovarian cancers can be done through the Risk of Ovarian Malignancy Algorithm (ROMA) testing procedure; and

WHEREAS, the ROMA test is a diagnostic tool used to assess the likelihood of ovarian cancer or a benign disease in women with a mass in their ovaries; and

WHEREAS, patients with a high ROMA score may be referred to gynecologic oncologists, which can lead to better surgical outcomes and survival rates; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, require that all laboratories within the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system have this test available to identify and refer veterans for such malignancies and refer veterans for appropriate care for benign disease.

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RESOLUTION NO. 223
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO PREVENT AND
TREAT SUBSTANCE-USE DISORDERS IN VETERANS

WHEREAS, the misuse and abuse of alcohol and other addictive substances is a major health problem for many Americans, including veterans; and

WHEREAS, veterans continued to be diagnosed with substance use or abuse within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), but specialized care for these diagnoses are not yet provided to all; and

WHEREAS, trends in opioid abuse had been improving prior to the pandemic, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates deaths from overdoses of opioids, especially synthetic non-methadone products such as fentanyl, increased for all Americans by at least 30% over the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, substance use disorders result in significant health and social deterioration and financial costs to veterans, their families and the nation; and

WHEREAS, data from a VA national study showed that 40% of VA outpatients reported hazardous use of alcohol and 22% reported full alcohol abuse, but only 31% of the respondents reported being counseled about alcohol use and fewer referred to care; and

WHEREAS, substance abuse increases risk for suicidal behavior in veterans, especially in women; and

WHEREAS, substance use disorders are also associated with family instability, homelessness, decreased worker productivity and declining health status; and

WHEREAS, veterans are at risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a wide array of other medical and psychological conditions, which may be associated with veterans' increased use of substances; and

WHEREAS, the VA offers evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders including stepped care and medication-assisted withdrawal for opioid abuse, but few integrated treatment programs that would work to address both the substance use disorder and co-occurring PTSD, depression, anxiety, or other medical or mental health conditions which may cause or exacerbate veterans' inappropriate use of substances; and

WHEREAS, in some locations, the VA lacks timely access to a continuum of available services that ranges from detoxification to rehabilitation in order to effectively treat substance use disorders; and

WHEREAS, few locations may offer gender exclusive care options that may be conducive to recovery for veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports program improvement and enhanced resources for VA substance use disorder programs, including gender-exclusive options for veterans who prefer them, to achieve a full spectrum of evidence-based accessible and available treatment; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this treatment must include identification of effective evidence-based psychotherapeutic programs for veterans with comorbid mental health and substance use disorder conditions, regardless of their place of residence.

RESOLUTION NO. 224
SUPPORT PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCED
RESOURCES FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MENTAL
HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) research indicates that rates of suicide among service members and veterans are significantly higher than for age-adjusted cohorts in the civilian population, with an average of 16.8 veterans a day committing suicide in 2020; and

WHEREAS, veterans are more likely to commit suicide than their civilian counterparts, while the risk for suicide among female veterans was higher compared to civilian adult females; and

WHEREAS, the VA has made suicide prevention its top clinical priority and developed a national strategy using a public health model to provide population-based initiatives to veterans who use VA health and those who do not and created a crisis intervention hotline, employing suicide prevention coordinators and developing a clinical algorithm to detect veterans with the most risk factors for suicidal ideation or suicide; and

WHEREAS, addressing the underlying conditions that may increase risk of suicide requires a multidisciplinary, comprehensive mental health program that identifies, screens, diagnoses and treats veterans with evidence-based protocols in a manner that is recovery-oriented, patient-centered, culturally sensitive and strives to tailor care to factors such as ethnic background and gender to ensure treatment engagement; and

WHEREAS, VA front-line staff often lack the skills to effectively manage crises and de-escalate situations with veterans with mental health disorders; and

WHEREAS, the most recent eras of veterans have demonstrated high reliance upon the VA and higher utilization of mental health and substance use disorder services; and

WHEREAS, the President has recently expanded eligibility to mental health care to all service members within their first year of separation from the military and to emergency mental health care for those veterans who may have discharges characterized as other than honorable; and

WHEREAS, the VA reports that veterans of these recent eras have sought care for a wide range of medical and psychological conditions, including mental health conditions, such as adjustment disorder, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, more than 1.7 million veterans received specialized mental health care from the VA; and

WHEREAS, the VA has improved access to mental health services at over 800 community-based outpatient clinics, but such services still are not readily available at all sites; and

WHEREAS, we remain concerned about the capacity in specialized PTSD programs and the availability of a full continuum of VA substance use disorder services from inpatient detoxification to long-term residential treatment beds; and

WHEREAS, although additional funding has been dedicated to enhancing and improving capacity in these programs, VA mental health providers continue to express concerns about sustained resources to support, and consequent rationed access to, these specialized services; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense and VA share a unique obligation to meet the health care needs, including mental health care and rehabilitation needs, of veterans who are suffering from readjustment difficulties as a result of wartime service; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports program improvements, data collection and reporting on suicide rates among service members and veterans; improved outreach through general media for stigma reduction and suicide prevention; sufficient staffing to meet demand for mental health services; and enhanced resources for VA mental health programs, including Vet Centers, to achieve readjustment of new war veterans and continued effective mental health care for all enrolled veterans needing such services; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VA security officers and other front line staff receive training in crisis management and de-escalation techniques, including safely restraining patients who have mental health crises on campus.

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RESOLUTION NO. 227
SUPPORT STATE VETERANS HOME PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the State Veterans Home program is a partnership between the federal government and the states to provide long-term care for aging, ill and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 150 State Veterans Homes in all 50 states and in Puerto Rico, which provide skilled nursing care, domiciliary care and adult day health care (ADHC) daily to almost 30,000 veterans and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes provide Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-supported skilled nursing beds for veterans while receiving VA's budget for skilled nursing care; and

WHEREAS, the VA provides a per diem payment that is authorized to cover up to 50% of the cost of care for skilled nursing care provided to veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 60% or lower and pays the full cost of skilled nursing care for veterans with 70% or higher service-connected disabilities or who require nursing home care for service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the VA also provides lower per diem payments for eligible veterans receiving domiciliary care and ADHC in State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, some State Veterans Homes also provide specialized care for veterans with severe mental health, behavioral and memory issues; and

WHEREAS, under the State Home Construction Grant Program, the federal government provides grants to cover up to 65% of the cost to construct, expand, rehabilitate or repair a State Veterans Home, with states required to match a minimum of 35% of the cost; and

WHEREAS, lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the advantages of modern nursing home designs that provide veterans with single rooms in smaller communal facilities, which can improve safety during health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as improve their quality of life through greater social interaction; and

WHEREAS, the costs to construct and operate more modern designs of State Veterans Homes are higher than for traditionally designed nursing homes; and

WHEREAS, a fiscal year 2019 regulation (RIN 2900-AO88) changed the rules and requirements for operating domiciliary care and ADHC programs, which increased the cost of these programs without providing commensurate increases from VA per diem support; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the growing number and needs of elderly veterans, including those with mental health, behavioral and memory issues, the State Veterans Home program must continue to be a major partner with the VA in meeting the long-term care needs of aging veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, calls on Congress and the VA to provide sufficient funding to support State Veterans Homes, including adequate per diem payments for skilled nursing care, domiciliary care and adult day health care, which properly support different levels of care within each program; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports sufficient funding for the State Home Construction Grant Program, to include adequate funding to support renovations of existing and construction of new State Veterans Homes using more modern designs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress and the VA should explore additional innovative programs to partner with State Veterans Homes to address the lack of options for aging veterans with severe mental health, behavioral and memory issues.

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RESOLUTION NO. 228
SUPPORT THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION TO
INCREASE HIRING OF CRITICAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has far exceeded its hiring goals in fiscal year (FY) 2023, however, VA has fell short in hiring Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Certified Nursing Assistances (CNAs); and

WHEREAS, CNAs are considered the backbone of nursing. Working together with registered nurses and LPNs, these health care workers often provide the majority of hands-on day to day care duties; and

WHEREAS, the VHA must hire 45,000 nurses over the next two years to keep up with attrition and growing demand for veterans' care; and

WHEREAS, the VHA must continue to make use of the workforce provisions Congress has approved in recent years to achieve that goal, with greater emphasis being placed on targeting hiring for needed LPNs and CNA positions; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, for FY 2024, VHA must continue its aggressive recruiting strategies and fill all of pending clinical care and support vacancies.

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RESOLUTION NO. 233
**REPEAL BENEFICIARY TRAVEL DEDUCTIBLE FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED
DISABLED VETERANS AND INCREASE REIMBURSEMENT RATES**

WHEREAS, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized under section 111 (g)(1), title 38, United States Code, to reimburse transportation expenses for certain service-connected veterans for VA-authorized examination, medical treatment or care; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 110–387 required the VA to permanently reduce to \$3.00 the applicable deductible, but service-connected disabled veterans are still subject to the deduction from the amount otherwise payable for each one-way trip unless the Secretary determines in an individual case that such deductible would cause severe financial hardship; and

WHEREAS, veterans currently receive a flat rate of 41.5 cents per mile for all transportation effective November 17, 2008; and

WHEREAS, service-connected disabled veterans eligible for beneficiary transportation reimbursements should not be required to help defray the cost of travel, in the form of a deductible, to and from a VA medical facility for medical examination or health care treatment; and

WHEREAS, it is grossly unfair for the VA Secretary to impose the deductible upon service-connected disabled veterans seeking treatment for service-connected conditions and service-connected veterans rated 30% or more when traveling in connection with any disability; and

WHEREAS, adequate travel expense reimbursement is directly tied to access to care for many veterans and is not a luxury; and

WHEREAS, the VA, in consultation with the Administrator of General Services, the Secretary of Transportation, the Comptroller of the United States and representatives of veterans service organizations, is required to conduct periodic investigations on the actual cost of travel incurred by veterans traveling to and from VA facilities for covered purposes; and

WHEREAS, after analyzing and adopting the findings of an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) report on operating costs for a privately owned automobile, the General Services Administration (GSA) determined that the per-mile operating costs for the official use of a privately owned vehicle by a federal employee as of July 1, 2022, is 62.5 cents per mile; and

WHEREAS, the VA continues to maintain that increasing veterans' beneficiary travel reimbursement rate to a rate more comparable to the GSA-approved rate would result in a reduction of funds available for direct medical care to our nation's veterans, and service-connected veterans should not shoulder the burden of receiving either medical care or adequate beneficiary travel payments; and

WHEREAS, when rates do not cover the cost of travel, veterans without resources are likely to delay health care access until their needs may become critical, resulting in higher health care costs and poorer health outcomes; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to repeal the Secretary's authority to impose a deductible for service-connected disabled veterans from the amount payable for beneficiary travel pay for medical examination, treatment or care; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to adopt the GSA mileage reimbursement rate to protect against erosion of the value of the benefit due to inflation; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to make provision in its budget for the cost of increasing veterans' beneficiary travel reimbursement rates to a more reasonable amount so that it can make the needed adjustment without the reduction in funds for direct medical care to sick and disabled veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 234
ADDRESS SOCIAL DETERMINANTS TO PROMOTE
HEALTH EQUITY AMONG VETERANS

WHEREAS, social determinants including health behaviors (30%), social and economic factors (40%), and physical environment (10%) are understood to affect about 80% of the variance in health outcomes for all people, while clinical care is only responsible for 20%; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the importance of social determinants in affecting health, starting in fiscal year 2022, the classification for disease codes (ICD-10) will permit social determinants of health to be coded as the primary diagnosis for outpatient visits; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization defines social determinants of health as “conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems;” and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has programming, services, and benefits available to address many of the social determinants that affect veterans’ health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, such wraparound programs include compensation for the service-connected disabled veterans; housing and safety net programming, including pension, for low income veterans; support for caregivers of certain veterans; education, vocational rehabilitation and job training; health and mental health care services for eligible veterans, including case management or care coordination for certain veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration’s Office of Health Equity espouses a vision “to champion the advancement of health equity and reduction of health disparities and to ensure appropriate individualized care to each Veteran,” and

WHEREAS, VA should strive for equity in all programming to be measured by disaggregating such data by sex, minority, ethnicity and LGBTQ status on applications for, awards for, and utilization of, its programs and services; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, will advocate for holistic programming to address social and economic factors (income, employment, education and family and community support), health behaviors (substance use, sexual behavior, diet and exercise) and physical environment (access to nutritional food, housing and transit) in addition to culturally relevant and personalized clinical care necessary to address health disparities among service-connected veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 235
IMPLEMENT A PILOT PROGRAM TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS GROWTH PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, a significant portion of veterans from all combat eras experience the chronic effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, without effective treatment, PTSD is associated with significant adverse consequences such as substance use disorders, family dissolution, unemployment, homelessness, involvement in the justice system and even suicide; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has developed effective programs for addressing the chronic needs of most veterans struggling with PTSD through trauma exposure- based therapies and pharmaceutical interventions; and

WHEREAS, the VA is an acknowledged world leader in developing effective care for the treatment of PTSD and continues to explore promising interventions; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding its use of effective VA treatment protocols for PTSD, there are high rates of dropouts in many traumatic exposure therapies, and significant numbers of veterans continue to struggle; and

WHEREAS, post-traumatic stress growth emphasizes the development of resiliency by encouraging veterans to adopt different belief systems that may improve their abilities to cope, problem solve and find meaning in their lives after exposure to trauma; and

WHEREAS, certain post-traumatic stress growth programs such as the U.S. Army’s Comprehensive Soldier Fitness initiative—Master Resilience Training and the Boulder Crest Warrior programs have been associated with improved psychological health, which may be sustained for months after treatment; and

WHEREAS, these programs are often provided by trained peer counselors who may themselves be in recovery from PTSD; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to develop a pilot program to assess standardized post-traumatic stress growth programs to ensure effectiveness in achieving long-term health outcomes in meeting the needs of veterans with treatment-resistant, complex PTSD.

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RESOLUTION NO. 236
PROVIDE EASY AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS AND SERVICES

WHEREAS, because of service-connected disabilities, many disabled veterans face mobility challenges when attempting to access Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care benefits and services; and

WHEREAS, the VA is currently authorized to transport any person for any purposes to any location in connection with vocational rehabilitation, counseling and for the purpose of VA examination, treatment or care; however, transportation programs offered through the VA do not meet all the transportation needs of service-connected disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA Veteran Transportation Program has three components to accomplish its mission to improve the quality of life for veterans by increasing access to health care through integrated and cost-effective transportation solutions; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) is intended to provide veterans with convenient and timely access to transportation services and to overcome barriers to receiving VA health care and services, and in particular to increase transportation options for veterans who need specialized forms of transportation to VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, wide variations in the eligibility for VTS transportation across the VA health care system are not consistent with overcoming barriers to receiving health care provided or purchased by the VA to service-connected veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA Beneficiary Travel program is not available to all service-connected disabled veterans with mobility challenges, and confusion among local VA facilities due to vague policies for using special-mode transportation, such as a wheelchair van, is reflected in lower-than-expected utilization; and

WHEREAS, the VA Highly Rural Transportation Grant program provides grants to assist only veterans in highly rural areas through innovative transportation services to travel to VA medical centers and to otherwise assist in providing transportation services in connection with the provision of VA medical care to these veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA lacks a consistent and comprehensive transportation policy for all service-connected disabled veterans across all established VA transportation and travel programs, benefits and services; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to operate an effective and efficient transportation program for all service-connected veterans and to simplify access to transportation benefits and services to receive timely and high-quality VA health care, benefits and services.

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RESOLUTION NO. 237
INCREASE VETERANS' ACCESS AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FACILITIES BY EXTENDING COVERAGE ON WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is committed to providing quality care for eligible veterans when they want and need care; and

WHEREAS, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, VHA had made some progress to improve access to health care services as the needs and preferences of the veteran patient population evolved; and

WHEREAS, regular business hours for VHA services are considered to be from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, but offering extended operating hours could ease the burden on service-connected disabled veterans in balancing family, employment, community obligations and other commitments; and

WHEREAS, VHA Directive 2013-001 states Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics that treat more than 10,000 unique veterans per year must

provide access to a full range of primary care, including women's health and mental health general outpatient services at least two hours beyond regular business hours at least once on weekdays and once every weekend; and

WHEREAS, local data including feedback from service-connected veterans and local DAV members should be used to determine which extended hour options would best meet the needs of each facility's enrolled patient population; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to, based on local access data and patient feedback, implement extended operating hours at VHA health care facilities for services such as primary, specialty and mental health services.

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RESOLUTION NO. 246
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ELIMINATE OR REDUCE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HEALTH CARE CO-
PAYMENTS FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, through dedicated service and sacrifice to a grateful nation, service-disabled veterans have earned the right to certain benefits; and

WHEREAS, as the beneficiaries of veterans' service and sacrifice, Americans want our government to fully honor our moral obligation to care for veterans and generously provide them benefits and health care entirely without charge; and

WHEREAS, premiums, health care cost sharing and deductibles are a feature of health care systems in which some costs are shared by the insured and the insurer in a contractual relationship; and

WHEREAS, studies have found that cost sharing reduces the use of care and can have detrimental health effects for the sickest and poorest participating patients; and

WHEREAS, subsequent research continues to determine adverse effects of cost sharing on health outcomes particularly for patients with chronic disabilities; and

WHEREAS, asking veterans to pay for part of the benefits a grateful nation provides for them is fundamentally contrary to the spirit and principles underlying the provision of benefits to veterans; and

WHEREAS, copayments were initially imposed upon veterans using the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system under urgent circumstances and as a temporary necessity to contribute to reduction of the federal budget deficit; and

WHEREAS, cost sharing is considered as a means of generating revenues to replace congressionally appropriated funding for the Department of Defense (DOD) and VA health care systems; and

WHEREAS, to improve its ability to generate revenue on the backs of service-connected disabled veterans, some continue to propose policies to eliminate the current practice of first applying third-party payments to offset veterans copayment debts; and

WHEREAS, Congress has forgotten or abandoned the traditional benevolent philosophy of providing free benefits to veterans as repayment for the unusual rigors, including sustaining grave injuries that require a lifetime of care, they underwent for the good of our country; and

WHEREAS, based on practices in the private sector, the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs and Defense, in the recent past, moved to dramatically impose fees and increase premiums and copayments, as if operating a commercial enterprise; and

WHEREAS, as a continuing cost of national defense and as our nation's foremost moral obligation, benefits for service-connected disabled veterans must remain a first priority of our government; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls for legislation to eliminate or reduce VA and DOD health care out-of-pocket costs for service-connected disabled veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 247
URGE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL FACILITIES TO
PROVIDE REASONABLE ACCESS TO SERVICE DOGS AND GUIDE DOGS
INCLUDING ENCLOSED ANIMAL RELIEF AREAS

WHEREAS, many veterans have service-connected conditions including visual, hearing or significant mobility impairments or mental illness for which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will approve use of a service or guide dog upon completion of approved training protocols; and

WHEREAS, the VA recognizes the benefit of service and guide dogs to veterans when their use can facilitate the rehabilitation goals, increase functionality, enhance independence and improve the quality of life for certain veterans; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive 1188(1) states that it is VHA policy to permit service animals to accompany individuals with a disability to all areas of a VHA property on the same terms and conditions, and subject to the same regulations, as generally govern the admission of the public, while maintaining a safe environment for patients, employees, visitors and the service animal; and

WHEREAS, section 1.218, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, and VHA Directive 1188 states the veteran is responsible for the service dog while on VHA property, and such responsibility includes providing water, food and elimination breaks for the service dog in an outdoor area; and

WHEREAS, veterans with service-connected visual, hearing, significant mobility impairments or mental illness require service and guide dogs to safely navigate VHA property to access needed benefits and services; and

WHEREAS, receiving needed medical benefits and services often requires the veteran and their service animal to remain at the VA medical facility for extended periods; and

WHEREAS, veterans must have reasonable access to safe enclosed areas to meet the required responsibility for care and stewardship of service dogs while on VHA property for extended periods;
NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges that the VA carry out its policies to permit reasonable access to VA facilities by service and guide dogs to veterans consistently throughout the system; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should enact legislation setting forth VA standards for admission to VA properties and management of service and guide animals that are equivalent to rules applicable to every other private and public structure in the United States as dictated by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each VA medical center provide enclosed areas in which a service dog has access to water and a safe area for exercise and elimination.

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RESOLUTION NO. 248

SUPPORT THE RIGHTS AND BENEFITS EARNED BY SERVICE-CONNECTED NATIVE AMERICAN AND ALASKA NATIVE VETERANS

WHEREAS, a higher percentage of Native Americans have served in the armed forces than any other racial or ethnic group, and many return to their communities in Indian Country upon discharge from the military; and

WHEREAS, the sovereign lands in Indian Country are often hundreds of miles from Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities, where poverty, lack of transportation and poor roads put great hardships on Native American veterans who need and have earned VA health care and other benefits; and

WHEREAS, in evaluating the needs of federally recognized Native American and Alaska Native veterans, especially those living on tribal lands, the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations has reported great travel distances without safe and accessible transportation to VA health care services, affordable and available housing, and a lack of local employment opportunity as pressing needs; and

WHEREAS, many Native American veterans who have completed military deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and who may be challenged by readjustment and mental health disorders are not afforded responsive medical attention due to insufficient mental health service availability from Indian Health Service or Tribal Health Programs; and

WHEREAS, many VA clinical care providers lack knowledge and understanding of Native American and Alaska Native cultures, including traditional healing and ways of managing illness and disability that are culturally and religiously appropriate, causing additional barriers to care for Native American and Alaska Native veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA executed with the Indian Health Service (IHS) of the Department of Health and Human Services, a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate and provide health care services, including mental health services, to Native American and Alaska Native veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA and IHS have yet to comprehensively implement the Memorandum of Understanding; and

WHEREAS, due to lack of implementation, tribal governments do not have broad knowledge of the existence of, or commitments in, the Memorandum of Understanding, and therefore have not generally

disseminated relevant information to Native American and Alaska Native veterans about their VA and IHS rights and benefits under the agreement; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of Health and Human Services to ensure the Memorandum of Understanding between the VA and IHS is fully implemented, and that direct providers of services, as well as their leaderships in both agencies, be held accountable to faithfully carry out the agreement so that service-connected Native American and Alaska Native veterans, especially those living on tribal lands, can receive the full benefits and services they have earned and deserve.

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RESOLUTION NO. 249
EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO
PROVIDE HOSPITAL CARE, MEDICAL SERVICES AND NURSING HOME CARE
TO ALL VETERANS OF THE KOREAN CONFLICT

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996 to exempt veterans from the Mexican border period or World War I from having to meet requirements in order to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical benefits; and

WHEREAS, more than 25% of the living veterans from World War II and the Korean War are not using the medical benefits they have earned because they are not deemed eligible by the VA; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 104-262 requires 0% service-connected disabled veterans to be means (income) tested in order to receive treatment by the VA at their medical facilities; and

WHEREAS, according to statistics proved by the VA, a total of 234 World War II veterans pass away on a daily basis and only 167,284 of these veterans are still alive; and

WHEREAS, the DAV, at its 2018 National Convention, has previously gone on record supporting “the exclusion of service-connected disabled veterans from the requirement of means (income) testing for treatment or service received at VA medical facilities;” NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1710(a)(2)(E) by adding the words “or World War II; or Korean Conflict.”

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RESOLUTION NO. 250
PROVIDE BENEFICIARY TRAVEL BENEFITS FOR UNSCHEDULED VISITS TO
RECEIVE CARE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, a cornerstone of patient-centered care is having excellent access to appropriate clinical care using appropriate modes of health care delivery at the time patients want and need the care; and

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) beneficiary travel provides payment of travel expenses within the United States under section 111, title 38, United States Code, to help veterans and other persons obtain care and services from the VA; and

WHEREAS, it is VA policy to pay travel expenses only for one-way travel to veterans who receive VA care without a scheduled appointment; and

WHEREAS, the nature of acute medical or psychiatric illness or minor injuries, for which there is a pressing need for treatment to prevent deterioration of the condition or impairing possible recovery, is generally unscheduled and episodic; and

WHEREAS, VA facilities have developed local policy to provide care to veterans on a “drop-in” basis rather than through a scheduled appointment and without properly documenting such pre-scheduled encounters, thus limiting travel benefits for service-connected veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA MISSION Act (Public Law 115–182) provides veterans urgent care benefits through contracted community providers but will only pay beneficiary travel on a one-way basis, having also defined urgent care as an unscheduled visit; and

WHEREAS, VA policy also subscribes to the principle that access to appropriate primary and urgent care must ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate unscheduled “walk-in” patients; and

WHEREAS, VA beneficiary travel partial reimbursement for unscheduled visits runs counter to the stated purpose of the benefit, which is to “help ensure that beneficiary travel is covered only when necessary for the provision of care or services”; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress and the VA to change current beneficiary travel policy to pay round-trip travel expenses to veterans who receive VA care without a scheduled appointment.

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RESOLUTION NO. 264

IMPROVE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL INFORMATION BETWEEN FACILITIES AND ACCESS TO ANY VETERAN'S MEDICAL RECORDS BY ANY AND ALL VETERANS' MEDICAL FACILITIES

WHEREAS, when veterans sign up for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care, veterans become part of the country's largest integrated health care system—with more than 1,200 care locations serving nearly 9 million veterans each year; and

WHEREAS, veterans receive regular care at one VA location of their choice or another, and, if veterans needs specialized medical treatments and services, VA may refer them to other locations as well; and

WHEREAS, the veterans' health care team will use its electronic medical record system to coordinate veterans' care no matter where they are; and

WHEREAS, care settings may include VA medical centers, VA community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), Vet Centers, VA Community Living Centers and other assisted living or residential settings, and veterans' own homes; and

WHEREAS, in May 2018, the VA began a multi-year effort to implement the new federal electronic health record (EHR) across the nation; and

WHEREAS, the federal EHR will ultimately simplify the experience for veterans and their health care teams, enhance standardization across VA and improve interoperability between VA, federal partners and the rest of the United States health care system; and

WHEREAS, the delay in implementing an interoperable modern health record system produces an inconsistent scheduling experience at VA medical facilities and community care partners nationwide, inability to see the broad view of veterans' medical history and service record, impedes the ability to make faster, smarter care decisions powered by data analytics that are provided by having a broad view of a veteran's medical history and service record, which ultimately impacts safe and high quality health outcomes for our veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports and requests that a national program be implemented where all veterans facilities nationwide be able to have access to all medical records, through a centralized computer network, regardless of the veteran's chosen primary medical facility or primary care physician in order to better serve our nations heroes.

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RESOLUTION NO. 265

SUPPORT RECRUITMENT OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS IN THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

WHEREAS, as veterans' demand for health care is increasing, the persistent lack of adequate health care staffing has been a major driver of longer wait times for veterans seeking Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) care; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) vacancy challenges continue; and

WHEREAS, VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) are experiencing an unprecedented shortage of medical personnel; and

WHEREAS, nearly a million mental health integration visits take place annually in VAMCs, and improving mental health and suicide prevention is a DAV priority; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, VA released its National Veterans Suicide Prevention Annual Report, which stated that the suicide rate for veterans was 1.5 times the rate of non-veteran adults, and the rate for veterans younger than 34 increased, and women veteran rates rose by 24%; and

WHEREAS, VHA Directive 1165 in 2021, excluded Physician Assistants (PAs) as a core mental health occupation, while VAMCs have chronic shortages of mental health providers; and

WHEREAS, PAs are highly educated professionals that are licensed to diagnose, treat, and prescribe medications; and

WHEREAS, PA education includes extensive training in psychiatry with mandatory didactic and psychiatric mental health clinical rotations; and

WHEREAS, 28% of VHA PAs are veterans who are on the front lines working to address the growing demand for mental health services, NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to enact legislation to provide high quality access to health care services and suicide prevention, which means it is essential to recruit and hire the most qualified health care occupations, including PAs, to meet challenges with health care access; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that PAs shall be included in dual postings for vacancies across VHA and strategically expand the appropriate diversity of professional backgrounds in critical clinical areas of mental health, primary care, women's health care, emergency, and geriatric care; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these critical enhancements in the VHA system involve the inclusion of PAs as a core mental health discipline in VHA mental health policies or directives; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PA Health Professions Scholarship Program be expanded, and all PA Residencies full-time employee equivalent is doubled, with strategic national veteran recruitment policy to support the expansion of veteran PAs.

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RESOLUTION NO. 274

CREATE A THREE-DIGIT NUMBER TO REPORT INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

WHEREAS, military experiences, such as deployment, mental health concerns, traumatic brain injury, substance use and transition to civilian life, can have a significant impact on relationships; and

WHEREAS, the use of aggression in intimate relationships has been found to be more common among veterans who have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, substance misuse and traumatic brain injury (TBI); and

WHEREAS, there is a National Domestic Violence Hotline number of 800-799-7233; and WHEREAS, a collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) created the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline as an easy-to-remember three-digit number of 988; and

WHEREAS, it is easier to remember and dial three digits rather than 10 digits; and WHEREAS, it has been proven that a shorter time period to get to speak to someone on a helpline saves lives; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges HHS and the VA to collaborate and create a three-digit number for veterans to report intimate partner violence similar to the creation of 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

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RESOLUTION NO. 278

SUPPORT A ROBUST COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATIVE AND RESEARCH PROGRAM FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

WHEREAS, traumatic brain injury (TBI) has been called the signature wound of veterans serving in Afghanistan and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, veterans struggling with the chronic effects of combat injuries, falls, vehicular accidents, and other trauma and illness leading to chronic brain injury that, in the most severe cases, will require a lifetime of services including extensive rehabilitation and lifelong personal and clinical support, including neurological, medical and psychiatric services, and physical, psychosocial, occupational and vocational therapies; and

WHEREAS, blast injuries were responsible for only a small portion of traumatic brain injury among post-9/11 veterans and service members, and despite significant drawdowns in those returning from deployment, workload in the polytrauma rehabilitation systems of care is projected to grow as veterans and service members continue to be exposed to falls, vehicular accidents and other acquired brain injuries that result in lasting brain damage and that the longer-term rehabilitative needs of veterans continue; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has not yet developed the programs to meet the full spectrum of longer-term needs to fill programmatic gaps the VA acknowledges in neurobehavioral rehabilitation and community reintegration or to provide assisted living or other supported housing arrangements for veterans with moderate to severe traumatic brain injuries; and

WHEREAS, the VA must also maintain programs to identify veterans with milder forms of TBI who may experience a variety of symptoms, including headaches, irritability, sleep disorders, memory problems and depression; and

WHEREAS, research demonstrates that even mild TBI may have long-term mental health and medical consequences, including a higher risk of developing dementia, and that symptoms are often comorbid with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and post-traumatic visual syndrome that can further confound diagnosis and treatment; and

WHEREAS, generations of veterans from earlier wars and conflicts may have suffered TBI, but this injury went unrecognized or was treated as mental illness; and

WHEREAS, milder forms of TBI may not be detected immediately, and the Department of Defense (DOD) and VA have recently released a suite of cognitive rehabilitation products for veterans and service members who sustain mild-to-moderate TBI, and have lingering cognitive impairment; and

WHEREAS, the VA maintains active research collaborations with the National Institutes of Health, the National Institutes of Disability Rehabilitation Research “model centers,” and the Defense Centers of Excellence in Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury and is an acknowledged world leader in research into TBI; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to authorize full payment for VA’s Traumatic Brain Injury Residential Rehabilitation program, to include payments for room and board that must now be made by veterans, and to look for opportunities to ensure greater expansion of the program across the nation; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to support permanent supported housing arrangements with specialized neurobehavioral rehabilitation for veterans with service- connected moderate to severe traumatic brain injuries; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on the VA to expand the universal screening it now provides to post-9/11 veterans to all generations of veterans and maintain resources within its polytrauma system of care to ensure their access to appropriate rehabilitation; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges that the VA and DOD continue to engage in TBI studies such as LIMBIC (Long-Term Impact of Military Relevant Brain Injury) research and that such research includes older veterans of past military conflicts who may have suffered similar injuries that went undetected, undiagnosed and untreated.

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RESOLUTION NO. 279 CONDUCT WELL-DESIGNED STUDIES TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVENESS OF HYPERBARIC OXYGEN THERAPY ON TREATMENT-RESISTANT TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

WHEREAS, thousands of veterans have received treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) (or both), which are often related to their military service, but have not experienced significant or sustained improvements in health; and

WHEREAS, the Food and Drug Administration has cleared Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) as a combination treatment of increased oxygen (hyperoxia) at increased hydrostatic pressure for several types of injury indications such as wound healing, necrotizing infections, burns, radiation injury and carbon monoxide poisoning, and its use for treating these conditions does not appear to have significant side effects for most populations; and

WHEREAS, in case series of TBI and/or PTSD populations, HBOT has statistically significantly improved cerebral blood flow and mean scores on post-concussion symptoms (PCS), PTSD, depression and anxiety symptom checklists, as well as cognitive functioning and quality of life, but these physiological changes have not necessarily been associated with clinically significant improvements; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the VA published its Evidence Brief: Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) for Traumatic Brain Injury and/or Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, which reviewed available high-quality studies (Randomized Controlled Trials or RCTs), in response to veterans’ and other stakeholders’ anecdotal reports of improvements in functionality and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the VA’s analysis found that there were no high-quality studies available on the effect of HBOT on post-traumatic stress disorder, and those available for TBI showed inconclusive benefits; and

WHEREAS, the inconsistent evidence of effectiveness and lack of significant red flags for adverse health effects have led some to call for further evidence development on the off-label use of HBOT for TBI and/or PTSD for veterans in whom standard treatments have not been successful; and

WHEREAS, there is a significant need for innovative treatments for many veterans with treatment-resistant TBI and PTSD who have also expressed the desire for mental health and symptom relief that does not require the use of controlled substances that can lead to overuse and addiction; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to conduct randomized controlled trials to determine the effectiveness of HBOT for veterans with treatment-resistant PTSD and TBI; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that should the VA determine that HBOT is effective, it should determine appropriate means of making this therapy accessible to appropriate veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 330
ENCOURAGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO SUBMIT
CANDIDATES FOR THE DAV SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

WHEREAS, DAV created the DAV Scholarships program as a means to recruit young volunteers and to recognize the efforts of America's young volunteers who serve disabled veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities and the local community; and

WHEREAS, the scholarship program awarded a total of \$110,000 in 2023 to 10 deserving youth volunteers in the form of a first-place \$30,000 scholarship, a second-place \$20,000 scholarship, a \$15,000 third-place scholarship, a \$10,000 fourth-place scholarship, two \$7,500 fifth-place scholarships and four \$5,000 scholarships; and

WHEREAS, at the beginning of each calendar year, DAV solicits every VA Voluntary Service program manager to nominate one deserving youth volunteer from their facility in order to be considered for one of the scholarships, but with little response; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, strongly encourages each Voluntary Service program manager at every VA medical facility to submit the name of a deserving youth volunteer to be considered for one of the scholarships in appreciation of their dedication to serving America's veterans through their voluntary service efforts.

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RESOLUTION NO. 331
ESTABLISH AUTOMATIC PAYMENT OF TRAVEL PAY FOR ELIGIBLE DISABLED
VETERANS WITHOUT ADDITIONAL BARRIERS

WHEREAS, certain disabled veterans are eligible for beneficiary travel pay to assist in covering the cost of travel associated with their care at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or through community care programs; and

WHEREAS, the VA has mandated the veteran make a request for payment of this benefit for each instance of care in which they are eligible; and

WHEREAS, over the past several years, the VA has increased barriers for veterans to be able to claim this benefit for which they are eligible; and

WHEREAS, the process moving online in its entirety to apply for travel pay has created significant barriers for veterans with limited access to technology, visually impaired veterans, those with cognitive issues including traumatic brain injury, and many other service-connected disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, the requirement for application for each instance of care itself creates an unnecessary barrier itself for service-connected disabled veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports implementation of a system that would initiate travel pay payment at the point of check-in for any appointment at, or facilitated through, the VA without any further barriers placed between eligible veterans and this benefit.

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RESOLUTION NO. 332
SUPPORT STATE VETERANS HOME PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the State Veterans Home program is a partnership between the federal government and the states to provide long-term care for aging, ill and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 150 State Veterans Homes in all 50 states and in Puerto Rico, which provide skilled nursing care, domiciliary care and adult day health care (ADHC) daily to almost 30,000 veterans and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes provide Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-supported skilled nursing beds for veterans while receiving VA's budget for skilled nursing care; and

WHEREAS, the VA provides a per diem payment that is authorized to cover up to 50% of the cost of care for skilled nursing care provided to veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 60% or lower and pays the full cost of skilled nursing care for veterans with 70% or higher service-connected disabilities or who require nursing home care for service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the VA also provides lower per diem payments for eligible veterans receiving domiciliary care and ADHC in State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, some State Veterans Homes also provide specialized care for veterans with severe mental health, behavioral and memory issues; and

WHEREAS, under the State Home Construction Grant Program, the federal government provides grants to cover up to 65% of the cost to construct, expand, rehabilitate or repair a State Veterans Home, with states required to match a minimum of 35% of the cost; and

WHEREAS, lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the advantages of modern nursing home designs that provide veterans with single rooms in smaller communal facilities, which can improve safety during health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as improve their quality of life through greater social interaction; and

WHEREAS, the costs to construct and operate more modern designs of State Veterans Homes are higher than for traditionally designed nursing homes; and

WHEREAS, a fiscal year 2019 regulation (RIN 2900-AO88) changed the rules and requirements for operating domiciliary care and ADHC programs, which increased the cost of these programs without providing commensurate increases from VA per diem support; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the growing number and needs of elderly veterans, including those with mental health, behavioral and memory issues, the State Veterans Home program must continue to be a major partner with the VA in meeting the long-term care needs of aging veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on Congress and the VA to provide sufficient funding to support State Veterans Homes, including adequate per diem payments for skilled nursing care, domiciliary care and adult day health care, which properly support different levels of care within each program; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports sufficient funding for the State Home Construction Grant Program, to include adequate funding to support renovations of existing and construction of new State Veterans Homes using more modern designs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress and the VA should explore additional innovative programs to partner with State Veterans Homes to address the lack of options for aging veterans with severe mental health, behavioral and memory issues.

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RESOLUTION NO. 335
URGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO SUPPORT
COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH ON HEALTH EFFECTS OF CHILDREN OF
VIETNAM VETERANS EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE

WHEREAS, research studies reviewed by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) have not shown that there are increased rates of birth defects among children of male Vietnam veterans, except for spina bifida, where it found a "limited/suggested" association between paternal exposure to the herbicides used in Vietnam, or to dioxin, and a higher risk of spina bifida among their children; and

WHEREAS, there is a growing body of evidence that exposure to herbicide and its contaminants can induce epigenetic changes that pass from parent to offspring in animal models; and

WHEREAS, NASEM has found that the available epidemiologic studies are of insufficient quality, consistency or statistical power to permit a conclusion regarding the presence or absence of an association with birth defects (other than spina bifida) as well as childhood cancer (including acute myeloid leukemia) in offspring of exposed people; and

WHEREAS, to resolve questions regarding paternally transmitted effects to their offspring, NASEM continues to recommend that laboratory research be conducted to characterize herbicides and their contaminants' potential for inducing epigenetic modifications, study paternal exposure in the absence of maternal exposure and review systematically defined clinical health conditions that are manifested later in the lives of offspring; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct comprehensive research, including those recommended by NASEM, to determine the level of association between herbicide exposure and birth defects and other conditions of children of Vietnam veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 336
SUPPORT SUSTAINED AND SUFFICIENT FUNDING TO
IMPROVE SERVICES FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

WHEREAS, compared to nonveterans, veterans are at higher risk of homelessness, and women veterans especially face unique challenges that increase their risk of homelessness; and

WHEREAS, many veterans experience post-deployment readjustment conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders acquired during or worsened by their military service, or traumatic brain injuries that may make their participation in the workforce difficult or impossible, making them more prone to homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) specialized homelessness programs each year provide health care to homeless veterans and other services to veterans; and

WHEREAS, with greater numbers of women serving in military deployments and the greater likelihood of women veterans being single parents, new and more comprehensive housing and child care services are needed; and

WHEREAS, a wide variety of public and private programs are in place to assist veterans in preventing or overcoming chronic homelessness, but these programs are often underfunded; and

WHEREAS, the VA initiatives to end homelessness among veterans through enhanced collaboration with other federal, state, faith-based, veterans service organization and community partners have made significant inroads in decreasing homelessness among veterans; and

WHEREAS, annual point-in-time counts, a "snapshot" of homelessness on a given night in America, have demonstrated downward or stable trends in homelessness since 2009 but have not yet registered the economic or psychosocial impact of quarantine and lockdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges Congress to sustain sufficient funding to continue to support the VA's initiative to eliminate homelessness among veterans and strengthen the capacity of the VA Homeless Veterans program to include increasing its mental health and substance use disorder programs' capacity, providing vision and dental care services to homeless veterans as required by law, incorporating child care and legal aid for veterans in homeless programs where possible, and improving its outreach efforts to help ensure homeless veterans gain access to the VA's specialized health and benefits programs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to continue to authorize and appropriate funds for competitive grants for transitional housing to community-based organizations; that it fund the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program to ensure prevention of homelessness among veterans and their families; that it authorize vouchers through Department of Housing and Urban Development and require the VA to provide to effective case management and health and supportive services necessary for them to stay housed; and that it fund the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program to reengage veterans in employment or other productive activity.

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RESOLUTION NO. 337
ENCOURAGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PROCESS
VOLUNTEER APPLICATIONS IN A TIMELY MANNER

WHEREAS, many DAV members want to join the ranks of volunteers who serve disabled veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities and in local communities associated with the VA; and

WHEREAS, there is great variability in both the process and timeliness of providing prospective volunteers all the required screenings, interviews, orientations and training prescribed by the VA facility; and

WHEREAS, these volunteers must undergo an arduous clearance process and background check that can require months of delay, as well as complete a lengthy application to volunteer and thus lose their services and the opportunity for voluntary activities to aid veterans; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the VA Voluntary Service program manager to ensure that volunteer applications are processed in an expeditious manner, because volunteers perform a valuable service to veterans in facilities and save taxpayers millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 116–315, the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, passed in January 2021; and

WHEREAS, section 7001 of that law required the Department establish a national policy regarding the medical exams required to certify volunteer drivers for the Volunteer Transportation Network; and

WHEREAS, despite briefings alluding to the VA's work responding to this requirement and multiple requests for updates, Congress is not aware of any such policy more than a year after that deadline passed; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on the VA to quickly develop and disseminate a straightforward, standardized and timely process for certifying volunteer drivers; once this process is finalized, the VA should undergo a concerted effort to not only disseminate the updated guidance but also seek out and recruit volunteers, especially those who began the certification process but discontinued it after facing too much bureaucracy to continue.

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RESOLUTION NO. 338

ENSURE QUALITY AND TIMELINESS FOR THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION AND VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM PROVIDERS

WHEREAS, Congress established the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP) under Public Law 115–182, the VA MISSION Act of 2018, to ensure that veterans have timely access to quality care when they are unable to receive care in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Community Care Program providers are deemed to be part of the VA integrated high-performing networks; and

WHEREAS, the VA establishes many goals for its performance and measures outcomes using standardized metrics for the health care industry comms including Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and other appropriate measures; and

WHEREAS, all VA facilities have participated in the Joint Commission for the past 35 years, and relevant facilities participate in the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCACPS) (patient surveys) and other programs establishing standards for the health care industry; and

WHEREAS, the VA and the Department of Defense routinely develop and revise clinical practice guidelines for best practices for treatment of many conditions for which veterans and service members are at risk, including suicidal ideation and behavior, post-traumatic stress disorder (including for military sexual trauma), substance use disorders, traumatic brain injury, depression, diabetes mellitus and hypertension; and

WHEREAS, the VA routinely collects information on wait times for each of its points of access to the health care system for primary, mental health and specialty care including for both new and established patients; and

WHEREAS, many private sector health care providers do not participate in programs that support quality or collect and publish data on quality or timeliness; and

WHEREAS, comparison data used by the VA is based on regional data collected by CMS; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to improve real-time access to quality and timeliness measures to ensure continued improvement; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress must require the VA to include key measures of quality and access in its contracts for intermediaries administering the Veterans Community Care Program to allow true comparisons between the VA and its network of providers and to ensure that all VCCP providers are in good standing in the states in which they practice by accessing data from national resources and state licensure boards; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that veterans community care providers be required to participate in annual training on VA resources available to veterans and its clinical practice guidelines for conditions associated with military service.

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RESOLUTION NO. 339

REQUEST CHANGE OF POLICY SO THAT RETIRED MEDICAL STAFF CAN RETURN WITHOUT FINANCIAL PENALTY AS NECESSARY TO SUPPLEMENT CURRENT STAFFING AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTERS

WHEREAS, every Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center (VAMC) is demonstrating a profound shortage of skilled and licensed as well as trained nursing and medical staff; and

WHEREAS, a large number of highly skilled staff are now retiring; and

WHEREAS, a significant number would be willing to return on a part-time basis; and

WHEREAS, if they do, all compensation is directly deducted from their retirement; and

WHEREAS, if the person works in a state where income tax is incurred, it would result in a net loss of income for trained staff; and

WHEREAS, there would be no benefit to the trained staff to return, as they would not receive enhanced benefits to their retirement unless they worked for a full year; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, recommends that this policy be changed to allow trained medical staff to avoid suffering the penalty from their retirement when they return to the VA to provide their highly skilled staff necessary to supplement current staffing; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV asks for this policy to be rescinded because we are losing highly skilled staff to the community.

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RESOLUTION NO. 340

OPPOSE MEANS TESTING SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, Public Law 104–262 requires 0% service-connected disabled veterans to be means tested in order to receive treatment in a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility; and

WHEREAS, countless thousands of veterans have relied on care from VA medical facilities for decades and now face the possibility of losing access to VA medical care because of income levels, consequently causing them undue financial hardship, pain and suffering; and

WHEREAS, these 0% service-connected disabled veterans have been relegated to the lowest eligibility categories for care and, in some cases, below non-service-connected veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the exclusion of service-connected disabled veterans from the requirements of means testing for treatment or service received at VA medical facilities and the inclusion of 0% service-connected disabled veterans in Priority Group 3.

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RESOLUTION NO. 341

SUPPORT PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING SERVICES TO FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS SUFFERING FROM POST-DEPLOYMENT MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES OR OTHER SERVICE-CONNECTED CONDITIONS

WHEREAS, veterans exposed to combat and other hardship deployments are known to be at risk for development of post-deployment mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and other serious mental health challenges; and

WHEREAS, left untreated or inadequately treated, a veteran suffering the chronic effects of PTSD, depression or other mental illnesses may suffer marriage and relationship breakdown, underemployment or loss of employment, financial hardship, social alienation and even homelessness, or involvement with the justice system; and

WHEREAS, a combat-exposed veteran who is not appropriately counseled for the psychological effects of PTSD or depression stands at greater risk of emotional and mental decompensation, whose consequences often fall directly on family members and dependents of such veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) embraces recovery from mental illness as its guiding principle in all VA mental health programs, and involvement of family members and dependents is often vital to a veteran's eventual recovery from mental illness; and

WHEREAS, subsection 1712A(b)2, title 38, United States Code, authorizes the VA Readjustment Counseling Service, through its Vet Center program, to provide psychological counseling and other necessary mental health services to family members of war veterans under care in such Vet Centers, irrespective of service-connected disability status; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted section 301 of Public Law 110–387 for the express purpose of authorizing marriage and family counseling in VA facilities to address the needs of veterans' families, including spouses and other dependent family members of veterans who are experiencing mental health challenges with attendant marital or family difficulties; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted sections 101–103 of Public Law 111–163 and sections 161–163 of Public Law 115–182 for the purpose of authorizing a wide array of support, care and counseling services for personal caregivers of severely injured veterans from all eras of military service; and

WHEREAS, Congress has recently established a grant program under section 201 of Public Law 116–171, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019, which would allow grantees to provide a variety of supportive services to at-risk veterans and family members; and

WHEREAS, section 1782, title 38, United States Code, authorizes a program of counseling, training and mental health services, including psychological support, for immediate family members of disabled veterans who need care for service-connected disabilities; who have service-connected disabilities rated at 50% or more disabling; who were discharged or retired from the armed forces for injuries or illnesses incurred in the line of duty; who are World War I or Mexican Border Period veterans; who were awarded the Purple Heart; who are former prisoners of war; who were exposed to radiation or toxic substances; or who are unable to defray the expenses of their care; and

WHEREAS, section 1781, title 38, United States Code, authorizes a program of health care, including certain mental health services, for immediate family members and dependents of a veteran who is totally and permanently disabled from service-connected disabilities or who died from disabilities incurred during military service; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish appropriate and effective programs to ensure that veterans who are enrolled in VA health care receive adequate care for their wounds and illnesses, including mental health-related illnesses, and, when appropriate, family members—whether family caregivers, spouses or other family dependents—receive necessary counseling, including psychological counseling, training and other mental health services authorized by law to aid in the recovery of veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 342
SUPPORT HUMANE, CONSISTENT PAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS
IN THE VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

WHEREAS, pain is one of the most prevalent reasons individuals, including wounded, injured and ill veterans, seek health care; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of veterans suffer from traumatic amputations and other severe injuries incurred during military service, while others suffer from a host of painful organic diseases and disabling conditions; and

WHEREAS, chronic pain is closely linked with depression and other mental health challenges, including suicidal ideation; and

WHEREAS, the serious adverse side effects of opioids, including physical dependence, overdose and suicide, have made Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other health care providers reconsider clinical guidance, policy and programming for pain management; and

WHEREAS, because of these adverse side effects, the number of veterans using opioid medications for pain management prescribed by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), which skyrocketed in the 2000s and peaked in 2012, has plummeted due to VHA's revising its policies and programs for managing opioids; and

WHEREAS, the VA has adopted a stepped, interdisciplinary approach to pain management using a patient-centered and holistic approach to delivering health care in order to maintain and improve the health and quality of life of veterans, and the VA's pain management program has been emulated in other public and private health care settings nationwide; and

WHEREAS, access to opioids has been compromised for many disabled veterans who have used these medications as prescribed for many years to reduce pain and maintain their quality of life and productivity; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of veteran patients with chronic pain who have been prescribed pain medication over long periods have been abruptly denied without the benefit of tapering or counseling or provision of alternate means of pain relief to reduce or eventually discontinue opioid therapy; and

WHEREAS, abrupt denial of opioid medications can lead to devastating health consequences, including compromised health, overdose or suicidal behavior; and

WHEREAS, the VA has not made access to substance use disorder treatment or medications for opioid use disorder, including first-line opioid agonists such as methadone, buprenorphine or overdose reversal drugs such as naloxone, universally available and accessible to veterans (even those at highest risk) across the system; and

WHEREAS, the VA recognizes non-pharmacological therapies, including complementary and integrative health therapies such as yoga, massage, acupuncture and chiropractic, as the best alternative in managing pain, yet VA policy does not require such therapies be available and be offered without locally imposed restrictions; and

WHEREAS, without appropriate psychological counseling and transition to suitable alternatives to controlled substances, including Schedule II controlled medications, veterans can suffer physical and mental anguish needlessly; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to redouble its efforts to conduct a uniform national pain management program to ensure that veterans requiring pain management, including those who have used prescribed pain medications for long time periods, are managed with patient- centered, interdisciplinary and holistic approaches with balanced regard for both patient safety and humane alternatives to the use of controlled substances, and while under VA care receive their prescribed medications in a timely fashion; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV encourages the VA to continually review and update its clinical guidance, policies and programming to ensure compliance with federal law and adherence to best practices in prescribing, dispensing and disposing of controlled substances.

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RESOLUTION NO. 343
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE AND PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE
SERVICES FOR CAREGIVERS OF SEVERELY WOUNDED, INJURED
AND ILL VETERANS OF ALL ERAS

WHEREAS, severely disabled veterans present great challenges to the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for acute, rehabilitative and long-term care health needs; and

WHEREAS, immediate family members and dependents are involved in the care and rehabilitation of severely injured veterans and are responsible for performing complete clinical care once provided by medical professionals, often with little to no relief while shouldering a great and lifelong burden as home and institutional caregivers and attendants, giving up or severely restricting their employment, future financial security, education and social interactions and suffering severe financial and personal penalties as a consequence in order to care for a severely ill loved one; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of such caregivers, the burden of direct care would fall on DOD and VA facilities or other institutions, at significantly higher financial cost and a reduced quality of life for these veterans; and

WHEREAS, the United States government owes its highest obligation to those who are put in harm's way at the call of the nation and become wounded, injured and ill as a consequence of that service; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, Public Law 111–163 established the VA's family caregiver program, which includes a Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) for all caregivers, and a Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) for the most severely disabled veterans, which provides family caregivers with a stipend, health insurance, additional respite care and case management services; and

WHEREAS, when Public Law 111–163 was enacted, only severely disabled veterans who were injured on or after September 11, 2001, were eligible for the PCAFC, excluding equally deserving disabled veterans and their caregivers from the program; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 115–182, enacted in 2018, extended eligibility for the PCAFC to prior generations of veterans in two phases: first for World War II, Korean War and Vietnam veterans, which took effect on October 1, 2020, and then for veterans injured after the Vietnam War through 9/11, which is scheduled to take effect on October 1, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the VA's eligibility criteria for the PCAFC has been the source of significant confusion and difficulty, particularly during the application, approval and reassessment processes, such that in 2017, 2018 and again in 2022, it was found that veterans and their family caregivers were being discharged from the PCAFC at such alarming rates that three different VA Secretaries placed a temporary moratorium on discharges and tier reductions; and

WHEREAS, the Court of Veterans Appeals for Veterans Claims (Court) ruled in the *Beaudette v. McDonough* case that veterans and caregivers who disagreed with a decision about eligibility for PCAFC must be provided full judicial review and due process rights, including the right to appeal unfavorable decisions to the Board of Veterans' Appeals, the right to see all evidence and the right to representation in their claims; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration's Caregiver Support Program (CSP) has had great difficulty implementing the Court-ordered appeals rights, which include application of the Appeals Modernization Act's requirements, which include mandatory requirements for decision notification letters; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on the VA to complete the final phase of the caregiver expansion required by Public Law 115–182 so that severely disabled veterans of all eras are equally eligible for the PCAFC; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should conduct aggressive oversight of the PCAFC and ensure the VA receives all the resources needed to timely and equitably expand eligibility, process all applications, and provide adequate supports and services to meet the needs of family caregivers; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA must expeditiously and fully implement the mandate of the Court's *Beaudette* decision to ensure that all veterans and family caregivers who make an application to the PCAFC and receive unfavorable decisions, have full judicial review and due process rights, including the right to representation, the right to review all evidence used to make their decisions, and the right to all options included in the Appeals Modernization Act; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should increase funding and enact legislation that would strengthen and expand access to and improve the provision of caregiver support services, including but not limited to fully recognizing family caregivers, adequate financial support, sufficient health and homemaker services, respite, education and training, and other necessary relief, to caregivers of all veterans severely ill and injured due to military service; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress and the VA must create and execute a strategic plan for military and veteran caregiver research, including longitudinal surveys and assessments, to evaluate current programs and services and monitor the health and well-being of caregivers to ensure the program's effectiveness and better inform policymakers; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that once the caregiver's responsibilities conclude, this nation must plan and assist them in transitioning back into the workforce or retirement, and VA must provide additional support, including, but not limited to, employment assistance, retirement planning and bereavement counseling, if their loved one no longer requires caregiving services due to recovery, requiring a higher level of care, or passing away.

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RESOLUTION NO. 344
SUPPORT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RESEARCH
INTO THE MEDICAL EFFICACY OF CANNABIS FOR
SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 classifies cannabis as a Schedule I substance, determined to have a high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use, making illegal the possession and use of cannabis even under a medical nature; and

WHEREAS, across 37 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico, state medical marijuana laws vary greatly, but all recognize the therapeutic effect of cannabis and cannabinoids; and

WHEREAS, the growing accessibility of cannabis and acceptance of its use for medical purposes by states set against federal law have raised important issues including public health concerns; and

WHEREAS, the lack of any amalgamated knowledge of cannabis-related health effects has led to uncertainty about what, if any, are the harms or benefits from its use; and

WHEREAS, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine conducted a rigorous review of scientific research published since 1999 about what is known about the health impacts of cannabis and cannabis-derived products—such as marijuana and active chemical compounds known as cannabinoids—ranging from their therapeutic effects to their risks; and

WHEREAS, the study found evidence to support that patients who were treated with cannabis or cannabinoids were more likely to experience a significant reduction in pain symptoms; oral cannabinoids provided relief for multiple sclerosis-related muscle spasms; and there was conclusive evidence the use of certain oral cannabinoids was beneficial for patients with chemotherapy- induced nausea and vomiting; and

WHEREAS, the study suggests that cannabis use increases certain risks, including but not limited to being involved in a motor vehicle accident, developing schizophrenia, other psychoses, and social anxiety disorders and developing cannabis use disorder; and

WHEREAS, this and other studies in their entirety are not conclusive; comprehensive clinical studies of cannabis, cannabis-derived products and their delivery systems are needed to prove medical efficacy for veterans who receive health care as provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports more comprehensive and scientifically rigorous research by the VA into the therapeutic benefits and risks of cannabis and cannabis-derived products as a possible treatment for service-connected disabled veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 345
SUPPORT THE AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT OF MEDICALLY RETIRED
VETERANS INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WITH AN OPT-OUT PROVISION

WHEREAS, some service members, while on active duty in the U.S. armed forces, may experience disabilities of varying degrees, and these disabilities may impact job performance; and

WHEREAS, in some cases, these service members may be medically retired by physical and/or mental conditions, as determined by the Physical Evaluation Board, which stand in the way of completing their duties; and

WHEREAS, despite the availability of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to help active-duty members who are medically retired understand available benefits, the medical retirement process is often confusing; and

WHEREAS, as part the TAP process, a presentation is made describing the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system and benefits; and

WHEREAS, enrollment into the VA health care system is presented as an opt-in option, placing the responsibility of enrollment on the veteran being medically retired, and transferring veterans' medical records from the Department of Defense (DOD) to the VA, is at times, problematic; and

WHEREAS, making enrollment into the VA health care system automatic during the separation process would relieve veterans being medically retired of responsibilities for enrolling themselves and would make the transfer of medical records from the DOD to the VA more seamless; and

WHEREAS, some veterans being medically retired may choose not to enroll in the VA and an opt-out provision should be included in the automatic enrollment process; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the automatic enrollment of medically retired veterans into the VA health care system with an opt-out provision.

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RESOLUTION NO. 346
IMPROVE URGENT AND EMERGENCY CARE BENEFIT FOR
SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) aims to provide enrolled veterans a uniform benefits package that emphasizes preventive and primary care and provides a comprehensive health care benefit plan including hospital, outpatient and long-term care; and

WHEREAS, a health care benefits package is incomplete without access to and coverage for urgent and emergent care; and

WHEREAS, the VA MISSION Act (Public Law 115–182) authorizes the VA to furnish veterans urgent care, which is typically lower cost than emergency treatment and with sufficient access can encourage veterans to receive health care in the appropriate setting; and

WHEREAS, the VA's emergency care statutory authorities, regulations, processes and procedures are complex; inconsistently applied across the Veterans Health Administration; and cause significant confusion for VA staff, veterans and community care providers; and

WHEREAS, the August 2019 VA Office of Inspector General report found a significant number of emergency care claims were inappropriately denied and many rejected claims were inappropriately processed, with some leading to wrongful denials and rejection of claims, and potentially placing undue financial risk on thousands of veterans; and

WHEREAS, such denied claims have transferred the liability of billions of dollars from the VA to veterans, resulting in serious financial challenges; and

WHEREAS, fear of incurring enormous financial liability from denied VA payment or reimbursement for emergency care causes many veterans to avoid or otherwise delay seeking or contacting emergency medical services; and

WHEREAS, Congress over the years enacted legislation to address barriers to emergency care and payment or reimbursement for such care for disabled veterans due to the VA's narrow interpretation of the existing authority for emergency care; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to simplify the eligibility for urgent and emergency care paid for by the VA; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to provide a more liberal and consistent interpretation of the law governing payment for urgent and emergency care and reimbursement to veterans who have received emergency care at non-VA facilities.

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RESOLUTION NO. 347

ENHANCE THE CIVILIAN HEALTH AND MEDICAL PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS AND SERVICES

WHEREAS, the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), known as CHAMPVA, is a health benefits program in which the VA shares the cost of certain health services with eligible beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, eligible beneficiaries include the spouse or child of a veteran whom the VA rated 100% permanently and totally disabled for a service-connected disability; the surviving spouse or child of a veteran who died from a VA-rated service-connected disability, or who, at the time of death, was rated 100% permanently and totally disabled; the surviving spouse or child of a military service member who died on active duty; and the primary caregiver of a veteran seriously injured during military service on or after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, VA medical centers are authorized to provide services to CHAMPVA beneficiaries under the CHAMPVA In House Treatment Initiative (CITI) program at no cost to the beneficiary but are provided at the discretion of the VA medical center director and available only on a space- available basis, after the needs of veterans are met; and

WHEREAS, if the local VA medical facility does not participate in the CITI program, the beneficiary must seek care in the private sector and the CHAMPVA beneficiary is responsible for an annual \$50 deductible for medical services rendered and 25% of reasonable and customary charges for patient care and pharmaceuticals, up to \$3,000 each year; and

WHEREAS, beneficiaries who are chronically ill can incur out-of-pocket medical care costs up to \$3,000 per year, and such costs can cause undue financial burden on a severely disabled veteran and family members; and

WHEREAS, numerous health care services such as chiropractic services, routine eye examinations, hearing aids, most dental benefits, and institutional and home-based long-term services and supports are not routinely covered under CHAMPVA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to make the CHAMPVA program more comprehensive, including dental and vision care and institutional and home-based long-term care, and eliminate the copayments

beneficiaries are required to pay out of pocket and lower the out-of-pocket costs for beneficiaries who do not live near a VA medical facility that participates in the CITI health care program; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports the CITI program and urges VA medical center directors to make that program available to CHAMPVA beneficiaries when resources are available.

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RESOLUTION NO. 348
ENHANCE LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, historically, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) occupied a leadership position in fostering many long-term services and supports (LTSS) programs now routinely available in the private sector; founded the medical specialty of geriatrics in conjunction with affiliated schools of medicine; and led the nation in biomedical research on aging, geropsychiatry and chronic illnesses prevalent in the veteran population; and

WHEREAS, today tens of thousands of service-connected veterans of all ages depend on the VA to meet their health care needs in post-acute and LTSS settings; and

WHEREAS, there is also a subset of service-connected veterans with chronic and terminal illnesses who need LTSS and will need institutional placements; and

WHEREAS, the number of veterans seeking LTSS has increased annually, and the VA estimates this trend to continue into the future; and

WHEREAS, as our nation's veteran population ages, the VA will face an ever-increasing demand for LTSS of all kinds; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, Public Law 106-117, significantly enhanced the VA's noninstitutional LTSS and required such services be provided to any veteran for a service-connected disability and to any veteran who is service connected 50% or greater disabling, yet the VA is only required to provide institutional LTSS to any veteran for a service-connected disability and to any veteran who is service connected 70% or greater; and

WHEREAS, lack of centralized planning upon which to base standardized policy leaves VA facilities to determine locally their own mix of institutional and noninstitutional approaches in providing LTSS, thereby relegating LTSS to a "second tier" of health care service and expectations within the VA system; and

WHEREAS, there is a large and glaring gap in the VA's LTSS program with statutory authority prohibiting the Department from paying for veterans to reside in community residential care facilities such as assisted living and family group homes, despite referring thousands of veterans to and inspecting facilities nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the success of noninstitutional and home-based LTSS is critically dependent on the ability of veterans' caregivers, whether they be family or friends, to assist in their care; and

WHEREAS, VA home and community-based programs are not uniformly available in all VA health care facilities, resulting in a consistent waitlist of veterans in need of such care; and

WHEREAS, the VA has not optimized its relationship with State Veterans Homes to ensure veterans in need of institutional and alternative forms of LTSS may avail themselves of state home facilities to consider all options for their provision; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, supports legislation to improve the VA's program of long-term services and supports for service-connected disabled veterans irrespective of their disability ratings; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to ensure each VA medical facility is able to provide service-connected disabled veterans timely access to both institutional and noninstitutional long-term services and supports.

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RESOLUTION NO. 356
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXTEND ELIGIBILITY OF A QUALIFYING VETERAN'S ADULT CHILD FOR THE CIVILIAN HEALTH AND MEDICAL PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, dependent children of certain veterans are provided medical care under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA); and

WHEREAS, a child of a veteran is eligible for CHAMPVA if the veteran is rated permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability, was rated permanently and totally disabled due to

a service-connected condition at the time of death or died of a service-connected disability or died on active duty and the dependent is ineligible for Department of Defense TRICARE benefits; and

WHEREAS, the eligibility of a dependent child for CHAMPVA ends at the age of 18, unless that dependent is enrolled in an accredited school as a full-time student until the age of 23 or marries or is a stepchild who no longer lives in the household of the CHAMPVA sponsor; and

WHEREAS, current law requires private health plans and insurers to offer coverage to adult children of beneficiaries to age 26 regardless of the child's financial dependency, marital status, enrollment in school, residency or other factors; and

WHEREAS, children of severely disabled veterans and survivors of veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice should not be penalized or denied the same rights and privileges as other citizens of a grateful nation enjoy; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to extend the eligibility of a qualifying veteran's child for CHAMPVA coverage to age 26 under the same conditions of covered adult children of beneficiaries in private health plans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 365
SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF THE VETERANS AFFAIRS PROGRAM OF
COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS' ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the current eligibility criteria for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) requires veterans to be rated at 70% or more by VA; or is combined with any other service-connected disability or disabilities, and a combined rating of 70% or more is assigned by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, to qualify for individual unemployability (IU), a veteran must have one of the following: a 60% or more disability evaluation based on a single service-connected disability or a 70% combined disability evaluation based on multiple service-connected disabilities, with at least one disability rated at 40% or more; and

WHEREAS, veterans who are entitled to IU are paid at the 100% rate and receive ancillary benefits commensurate to veterans rated 100%; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the eligibility expansion of PCAFC to include those veterans who have been granted IU, but whose combined rating is less than 70% who are in need of a caregiver.

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RESOLUTION NO. 380
PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE DENTAL CARE AS MEDICAL CARE FOR
NONSERVICE-CONNECTED SECONDARY CONDITION(S) TO BEING
PRIMARILY CAUSED BY OR CONTRIBUTED TO BY SERVICE-CONNECTED
CONDITION(S) OR TREATMENT FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED CONDITION(S)
WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

WHEREAS, DAV recognizes that oral health is integral to the general health and well-being of a veteran and is part of comprehensive health care; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system is mandated under section 1712, title 38, United States Code, to provide outpatient dental services to veterans rated 100% service connected, to veterans who were held prisoner-of-war or to those who have sustained dental trauma in performance of military service; and

WHEREAS, irrespective of service-connected disability, section 1701(9), title 38, United States Code, defines "preventive health services" as a broad collection of VA health services that improve, protect and sustain the general health and well-being of veterans enrolled in VA health care, to include "such other health care services as the Secretary may determine to be necessary to provide effective and economical preventive health care;" and

WHEREAS, prescribed medications to treat service-connected disabilities, such as mental health and digestive conditions, can cause dental issues, such as tooth decay, gum disease and damage to the tooth enamel or tooth loss; and

WHEREAS, those who suffer with service-connected mental health conditions are more likely associated with painful temporomandibular disorder and may be part of the etiology of awake bruxism and sleep bruxism; and

WHEREAS, many medical doctors lack oral health related knowledge in practice and have perceived barriers to oral health care services; and

WHEREAS, VA maintains oral and dental programs within its health care system, diagnostic services, preventive dental care root canals and other services to manage oral health problems and restore function (called endodontic or restorative services), dental surgery, and emergency dental care; and

WHEREAS, a veteran must file a claim for a service connection of a dental issue prior to being treated at VA for dental care, which can increase risk of irreversible damage to teeth, jaw alignment, gums due to periodontitis (advanced gum disease), and ultimately tooth loss; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expand VA's scope of oral health beyond only service connection due of trauma by providing dental treatment for nonservice connected, secondary condition(s), linked to be primarily caused by or contributed by service-connected condition(s) or treatment for service-connected condition(s); AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VA conduct research on the connections between general health and oral health, encompassing all aspects of medicine connected with the mouth and face.

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RESOLUTION NO. 403 STRENGTHEN AND PROTECT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

WHEREAS, this nation's highest obligation is to the men and women who were put in harm's way in its defense and became wounded, injured and ill as a consequence of that service; and

WHEREAS, America's veterans have earned and deserve high-quality, comprehensive and veteran-focused health care designed to meet their unique circumstances and needs; and

WHEREAS, there are over 9 million veterans who have enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system, of whom over 6 million receive some medical services from the VA each year, and millions of service-connected disabled veterans who rely on the VA for all or most of their medical care; and

WHEREAS, the increasing demand for VA health care reflects changes in the veteran patient population, such as the advanced aging of many World War II, Korea and Vietnam veterans in greater need of health care; high veteran satisfaction with the VA's comprehensive and coordinated delivery of health care; and changes in health care practice, such as the increasing use of pharmaceuticals, advances in technology and increasing provision of community care; and

WHEREAS, the VA health care system's primary mission is to provide service-connected veterans timely, high-quality health care that offers a full continuum of services, including but not limited to foundational services such as primary care; mental health care, and specialized care for prostheses, spinal cord injury and disease, blindness, amputees, polytrauma, toxic and environmental exposures, as well as pharmacy and long-term services and supports in both institutional and noninstitutional settings; and

WHEREAS, while funding for the VA to furnish medical care has increased year after year, it has not kept pace with demand from the rising number of veterans using the VA, the growing volume and intensity of health services being used, and the increasing reliance on using the VA health care system; and

WHEREAS, the VA and Congress must work together to provide additional resources to maintain sufficient staffing levels, eliminate disparities in treatment, and improve information technology necessary for the care and treatment of injured and ill veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA must maintain a "critical mass" of capital, human and technical resources to promote effective, high-quality care for veterans, especially those with sophisticated health problems such as blindness, amputations, spinal cord injury or chronic mental health problems; and

WHEREAS, it is well documented that the VA provides health care that is as good or better than private sector health care, and does so at a lower cost compared to other national health care systems; and

WHEREAS, veterans who use the VA health care system have repeatedly indicated their preference for and satisfaction with the care they receive directly from the VA, notwithstanding existing problems that the VA must overcome, including the lack of timely and convenient access in some locations; and

WHEREAS, independent assessments of the VA health care system have found that the principal cause of access problems was insufficient funding provided to the VA to meet the growing demand for care by veterans; and

WHEREAS, the VA must develop and implement a long-term strategy to rebuild, modernize, maintain and expand medical facilities, and Congress must provide adequate and timely funding to fulfill the VA's health care infrastructure plans; and

WHEREAS, the VA must continue to fully and faithfully implement the VA MISSION Act (Public Law 115-182) to ensure that the VA remains the primary provider and coordinator of care for veterans, while optimizing the use of new community care networks to fill in gaps when and where the VA is unable to deliver timely, convenient care; and

WHEREAS, VA must realign and expand availability of health care services to meet the diverse needs of future veterans, including women and minority veterans and those who reside in rural and remote regions far from VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, the VA must reform its management by increasing efficiency, transparency and accountability to become more veteran-centric and responsive as an organization; and

WHEREAS, in addition to its first mission of providing care to ill and injured veterans, the VA is also expected to fulfill three other critical health care missions: educating and training health care professionals, conducting medical and prosthetic research and serving the nation in times of national emergency; and

WHEREAS, each year, approximately 120,000 health professions trainees receive clinical training in VA facilities through academic affiliations with over 1,800 educational institutions, including 97% of the nation's medical schools. The Medical and Dental Education Program brings together academic institutions and the VA to provide graduate medical education; and

WHEREAS, each year, the program provides clinical experiences to 75,000 medical and 1,000 dental trainees; and

WHEREAS, 99% of medical schools are affiliated with the VA, including 153 Liaison Committee on Medical Education-accredited allopathic schools and the 37 Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation-accredited osteopathic medical schools; and

WHEREAS, the VA's biomedical research and development programs have established new treatments and models of care tailored to the needs of disabled veterans, including a vast array of prosthetic, orthotic and other assistive devices, and elevated the standard of medical care for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, the VA has a federal emergency preparedness responsibility to assist the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services with natural disasters and national emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the VA also serves as a backup for the Department of Defense in times of war; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, believes the nation must continue to honor the service and sacrifices of our nation's ill and injured veterans by strengthening and protecting a modern, high-quality, accessible and accountable VA health care system; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that to provide timely and convenient access to enrolled veterans, the VA health care system remains the primary provider and the coordinator of care, while continuing to optimize the use of community care networks to fill in gaps, particularly in rural and remote areas; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on Congress and the Administration to provide timely and sufficient funding to the VA health care system to meet the continuing demand for care by ill and injured veterans in order to fulfill our promises to the men and women who served; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV will oppose any recommendation or proposal that could lead to weakening, diminishing or dismantling the VA health care system that millions of veterans have chosen and rely upon or that would weaken VA research or medical education programs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 405 SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO EXPAND THE CURRENT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM

WHEREAS, veterans enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Foreign Medical Program are authorized medical care specifically and only for service-connected disabilities to include those rated 100% permanent and total; and

WHEREAS, currently 100% permanently and totally disabled veterans are authorized unilateral health and dental care not limited to service-connected disabilities within the VA health care system; and

WHEREAS, if a veteran receives medical care in a country outside the U.S., VA can only cover the cost of services that are medically necessary to treat VA-rated, service-connected disabilities, and conditions that are associated with a service-connected disability and that VA determines are worsened or aggravated by the service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, the veterans can choose any licensed health care provider in the foreign country where the veteran lives or travels to; the veteran does not need a referral; and

WHEREAS, VA will pay claims by U.S. Treasury check; if care is received in a country outside the U.S. that cannot accept U.S. Treasury checks, the veteran will need to find another way to cash these checks; and

WHEREAS, VA also does not cover travel costs, costs for paying bills, charges for services or send medicines by mail or cover mail-order medicines from the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report GAO – 20-620, noted VA should continue to improve access to quality disability medical exams for veterans living abroad; and

WHEREAS, the growing population of veterans who travel and live in United States territories and foreign countries continue to struggle to have timely access and quality of health care provided by or through the VA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges that the VA collect data on where veterans reside outside of the continental United States; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, upon identifying the veterans' population with foreign residency and determining which VA health care system or cross agency partners can provide veterans' health care that can better meet the health care needs of veterans who reside in foreign countries; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VA update policies and procedures to expand quality health care services with the need of the growing population of veterans who travel and or reside in foreign countries; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress should enact legislation to collect data to better determine the needs of service-disabled veterans and to expand access and health care and dental care services for these veterans who travel or reside in foreign countries; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that legislation to provide health and dental care not be limited to service-connected disabilities for veterans considered to be 100% permanently and totally disabled and enrolled in the Foreign Medical Program.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 406 URGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO IMPROVE THE NURSING HOME PROGRAM

WHEREAS, like many older Americans, aging veterans may rely on nursing home care to meet their daily needs; and

WHEREAS, over the next two decades, an aging veteran population, including a growing number of service-disabled veterans with specialized care needs, will require long-term care (LTC); and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides or pays for nursing home care in three nursing home settings: VA-owned and -operated community living centers, publicly or privately owned community nursing homes, and state-owned and -operated State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, in general, the three settings provide similar nursing home care, in which veterans receive skilled nursing care, recreational activities and other services; and

WHEREAS, the VA has initiated a rating system for all its 133 VA nursing homes; and WHEREAS, a nursing home's overall star rating is based on Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) data and has three components: health inspections, staffing and quality measures; and

WHEREAS, according to the VA Nursing Home rating system, one star indicates the lowest possible rating, while five stars indicates the highest possible rating; and

WHEREAS, CMS and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have reported quality and oversight needs of VA-owned and -operated community living centers, publicly or privately owned community nursing homes, and state-owned and -operated State Veterans Homes; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA Nursing Home Program to include VA-owned and -operated community

living centers, publicly or privately owned community nursing homes, and state-owned and -operated State Veterans Homes improve their delivery of high-quality care and services that our nation's veterans earned and deserve; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA must recruit and retain only the best health care professionals and support staff and must train and hold all employees accountable for their actions or inactions.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 407

URGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE BENEFICIARY TRAVEL SELF-SERVICE SYSTEM FOR VETERANS

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) implemented the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS) to provide timely processing and payment of travel reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, the price of gasoline has steadily increased, creating a financial hardship for disabled veterans who must travel great distances for their medical care and treatment; and

WHEREAS, though BTSSS allows the disabled veteran to submit a travel reimbursement claim through any mobile device or computer and receive a payment within five business days, disabled veterans are having issues with the online portal and are unable to receive adequate assistance from Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff; and

WHEREAS, the BTSSS utilizes Bing Maps, which may not be updated with the disabled veteran's proper address, causing an error with submitting the required form; and

WHEREAS, not all disabled veterans have access to the internet, and payments may take months to process; and

WHEREAS, veterans are unable to speak to a VA representative in real time when they receive an error with the system and may become stressed and overwhelmed with the process; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to provide real-time assistance with the current travel claim process, whether that be the BTSSS portal or another system; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA provide alternate methods for travel reimbursement that demonstrate inclusivity to all disabled veterans, such as the previously provided Kiosk Check-In System.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 409

PROVIDE PEER-TO-PEER INFERTILITY CARE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

WHEREAS, the Infertility Care Program is difficult to get through; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 114–223 allows the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to provide assisted reproductive technology, including in vitro fertilization (IVF), to certain eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, little is known regarding veterans' experiences accessing IVF through Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) community care contracts with IVF providers; and

WHEREAS, there is a study by a medical care journal which found six areas that need improvement; they are:

- The need for improved communication regarding IVF benefits;
- The need for expanded IVF benefits;
- The lack of a comprehensive care coordination program;
- Poor access to IVF providers in some areas of the country;
- Special services needed for veterans with spinal cord injuries;
- The IVF policy may be discriminatory to single and LGBTQ+ veterans; and

WHEREAS, many veterans with service-connected conditions related to reproductive health have taken advantage of the IVF benefit, though limitations on these benefits have prevented other veterans from taking advantage of it; and

WHEREAS, further attention needs to be paid to improving communication and coordination of IVF services with ongoing VA care and ensuring special populations, including those living in rural areas and veterans with spinal cord injuries, have access to IVF services as needed; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, encourages the VA to have a navigator work with each veteran or spouse that goes through IVF; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the navigator be someone that has gone through the IVF program.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 414

PROVIDE RESEARCH IN PREVENTING SUICIDE IN LGBTQ+ VETERANS

WHEREAS, the LGBTQ+ veteran is more likely to experience suicidal ideation than their cisgender and heterosexual peers; and

WHEREAS, those who identify as LGBTQ+ face physical and mental health challenges; and WHEREAS, LGBTQ+ veterans experience higher rates of health conditions related to military sexual trauma, HIV/AIDS, intimate partner violence, substance abuse and tobacco use, and experience a higher risk for suicide; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports Department of Veterans Affairs research in preventing suicide in LGBTQ+ veterans.

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RESOLUTION NO. 427

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE FOR SERVICE CONNECTION FOR HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT HAVE BEEN DETERMINED TO BE RELATED TO THE ANTHRAX SHOT

WHEREAS, veterans were forced to receive the anthrax vaccine for deployed and non-deployed service members during the Gulf War.

WHEREAS, deployed and non-deployed veterans report the same type of symptoms; and WHEREAS, the University of Minnesota Brain Sciences Center at the Minneapolis Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center conducted research indicating a direct connection between the anthrax shot, brain atrophy, respiratory and gastrointestinal issues; and

WHEREAS, independent research has shown, the anthrax vaccine was one of the most reactogenic vaccines included in Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS); and

WHEREAS, even though the anthrax vaccine may be acceptable in overseas military locations because of impending threat of anthrax exposure, the cost-benefits of vaccination in less high risk military populations may be more questionable; and

WHEREAS, civilian doctors should be aware of reporting anthrax vaccine adverse reactions; and

WHEREAS, Military and civilian doctors should also be diligent in their reporting to VAERS of cases of adverse reactions to anthrax vaccine; and

WHEREAS, after the Gulf War, veterans reported a variety of health issues that began during or soon after returning from deployment, prompting investigations into the epidemiology and etiology of the complaints; and

WHEREAS, several population-based studies revealed symptoms were present in both deployed and non-deployed Gulf War veterans with a significantly higher rate in deployed Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, various studies establish and recognize a direct relationship between the anthrax vaccine and symptoms suffered by veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the to change their policy and allow all veterans who received the anthrax vaccine to be automatically qualified for VA health care without being categorized as Gulf War syndrome

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RESOLUTION NO. 428

SUPPORT SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR POLYTRAUMA UNITS AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTERS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Polytrauma System of Care is the largest integrated system of care dedicated to the medical and rehabilitation needs of veterans and service members with combat- and non-combat-related traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and polytrauma; and

WHEREAS, catastrophically injured veterans are treated at five Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers (PRC), located in Tampa, Richmond, Minneapolis, San Antonio and Palo Alto, for intensive care and long-term restoration and rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, Polytrauma Support Clinic Teams or Polytrauma Points of Contact are located in VA medical centers across the country to provide specialized outpatient care in coordination with their Polytrauma Network Site (PNS) and offer continuing medical and rehabilitation care and support closer

to the home community for veterans who have experienced a mild-to-moderate TBI or polytraumatic injury; and

WHEREAS, veterans spend long periods in the VA recovering from their injuries and receiving patient-centered care in specialized polytrauma settings; and

WHEREAS, this specialized care is extraordinarily expensive and complex, often addressing complications from multiple amputations, TBI, burns, hearing and visual impairments, multiple shell fragment wounds and other catastrophic injuries; and

WHEREAS, since the VA's current nursing home capacity is primarily designed to serve elderly veterans, the VA must make every effort to create an age-appropriate environment for younger veterans that recognizes their different psychosocial needs; and

WHEREAS, having the support of their families and friends is an integral part of these veterans' treatment and recovery process; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to request and allocate sufficient resources for polytrauma centers and PNSs to ensure these centers include adequate space and other services for veterans' ongoing rehabilitation, social and recreational needs and dedicated space, including therapeutic residential facilities, for disabled veterans and family members who must often stay for extended periods to assist in veterans' recovery and rehabilitation; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on the Secretary to support the provision of longer-term neurobehavioral and vocational support in age-appropriate settings within or outside of the VA for veterans with moderate-to-severe injuries who require such programming.

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RESOLUTION NO. 429
SUPPORT SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS PROSTHETICS AND SENSORY AIDS SERVICE
AND TIMELY DELIVERY OF PROSTHETIC ITEMS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has operated a nationwide prosthetics and sensory aids program, organized as Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS), for more than a half-century; and

WHEREAS, tens of thousands of veterans need the VA's life-changing PSAS care and services and obtain a variety of items including prosthetic limbs, custom wheelchairs, orthotic items, eyeglasses, hearing aids, a variety of implantable surgical devices and supplies—a need that continues to rise due to the aging of the veteran population and grievous injuries in war veterans, past and present; and

WHEREAS, the VA provides millions of prosthetic items or devices to millions of veterans; and WHEREAS, PSAS provides artificial limbs to thousands of veterans and wheeled mobility to about hundreds of thousands of veterans; and

WHEREAS, in many cases, prosthetic items are a truly individualized extension of the body and can impact all aspects of veterans' lives; and

WHEREAS, the VA must maintain flexibility in ordering and delivering a variety of state-of-the-art prosthetic aids to meet the unique needs of wounded, ill and injured veterans, including women veterans who require prostheses that are sized appropriately for their bodies and allow for the physical changes in their bodies during pregnancy and menses; and

WHEREAS, PSAS has completed the final rule on regulations designed to standardize its procurement policies and administrative processes and to improve its purchasing power and leverage its position in the prosthetic, orthotic and medical device marketplace; and

WHEREAS, changes in procurement practices have in some cases negatively affected the timeliness of delivery and quality of prosthetic, orthotic and other items to many veterans and may limit veterans' access to prostheses that “promote, preserve or restore” function in accordance with current law; and

WHEREAS, throughout the process, the VA should ensure appropriately trained prosthetic representatives and rehabilitation specialists are available to maintain the VA's strong connection between veterans and clinical components of prosthetic care and services; and

WHEREAS, the VA must rededicate itself to becoming a leader in prosthetic care by providing cutting-edge services and items to help injured, ill and wounded veterans fully regain mobility and achieve maximum independence in their activities of daily living and in sports activities such as running, cycling, skiing, rock climbing and other physical exercises if they so choose; and

WHEREAS, research and development funding in addition to ongoing training to ensure that prosthetists and procurement officers are up to date on all available technologies is integral to the VA's ability to provide such leadership to the field; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to retain centralized funding for PSAS, which enables the program to deliver high-quality prosthetic items to all enrolled veterans needing such items and to train veterans on appropriate use and care of the device; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to retain its goal of maximum recovery and independent living for our highest-priority veterans; to adopt procurement policies and staff training on advances in and other practices that accelerate the timely delivery of, and responsive maintenance and repair of, all prosthetic items; and to take fully and fairly into account the unique needs of severely injured and wounded veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 430
ENSURE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STAFF WHO WORK
TO REHABILITATE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED VETERANS HAVE
ADEQUATE TRAINING IN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has established training and assessment protocols for blind and visually impaired veterans and provides them assistive technology training; and

WHEREAS, training on technology-related devices and equipment encompasses a growing proportion of the rehabilitation needs of veterans with blindness or visual impairment; and

WHEREAS, VHA acknowledges competition for scarce computer assistive technology instructor specialists; and

WHEREAS, staff and supervisors within Blind Rehabilitation Service acknowledge difficulties recruiting and retaining certified computer assistive technology specialists and ensuring staff remains abreast of evolutionary advances in assistive technology for the blind; and

WHEREAS, enhancements of electronic assistive devices are continually introduced; and WHEREAS, blind and visually impaired veterans utilize assistive technology to accomplish tasks in manual skills, living skills, orientation mobility, computing and basic quality-of-life needs; and

WHEREAS, any individual within Blind Rehabilitation Service that either provides training or assesses visually impaired veterans must be knowledgeable on the capabilities of such devices; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges that the Department of Veterans Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Service ensure that all personnel involved with the assessment and training of blind and visually impaired veterans receive regular training in the form of continuing education credits or achieve independent certification on technological solutions and adaptive aids.

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RESOLUTION NO. 436
SUPPORT AND PROMOTE FITNESS PROGRAMS TO MANAGE OVERALL
HEALTH NEEDS OF SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS

WHEREAS, veterans suffer various physical and mental health issues; and

WHEREAS, regular physical activity lowers the risk of depression, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and eight types of cancer; and

WHEREAS, physical activity may also reduce the risk of weight gain, dementia and falls, improve bone health, endurance and help you feel more energetic; and

WHEREAS, research studies have shown, physical fitness is beneficial for physical and mental health, at any age, reducing the need for pharmaceutical treatment and more costly care; and

WHEREAS, certain community care programs are limited to a specific number of visits a veteran is authorized, which does not consider the extent of needed treatment; and

WHEREAS, continued physical fitness, outside the community-based provider can continue to provide physical and mental relief from symptoms, which can reduce the need for extensive pharmaceutical treatment and more costly care; and

WHEREAS, annual health care reports can show whether the physical fitness supplement is cost effective, reducing Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pharmaceutical costs and more costly care; and

WHEREAS, there should be no age limitation; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, recommends the VA expand the Healthy Living, Be Physically Active and MOVE! Weight Management Programs, for overall whole health and not only limited to weight loss management or physical therapy recovery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VA integrate physical activities/fitness for veterans that choose or are directed by medical providers to integrate and or continue physical activity or fitness to manage over health needs.

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RESOLUTION NO. 437
REVIEW RE-CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS THAT DISCOURAGE
COMMUNITY-BASED PROVIDERS FROM GETTING RE-CERTIFIED
WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system utilizes various community-based providers for various medical treatments for veterans that are outside the mileage treatment requirement; and

WHEREAS, veterans in underserved areas by the VA health care system regularly use these community-based providers for treatment for service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, VA has established new re-certification requirements that effect the number of community-based providers, forcing some community providers to discontinue the necessary treatment for veterans; and

WHEREAS, the decrease in the number of community-based providers drastically effect the number of veterans that depend upon community-based providers for treatment; and

WHEREAS, the VA has accepted credentials from the state or collegiate institutions for community providers in the past and there have not been negative reports regarding services provided to veterans; and

WHEREAS, there is no apparent need for such strict re-certification requirements; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, goes on record recommending the VA reconsider the certification and re-certification process in order to encourage more medical and mental health providers to become community-based providers for the VA and keep the current community-based providers for the VA, to ensure the veterans not within adequate distance from a VA facility that may have the necessary services and that utilize community-based providers continue to get the treatment to which they are entitled.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 475
SUPPORT RESEARCH ON, AND EXPAND ACCESS TO, INVESTIGATIONAL
DRUGS FOR AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

WHEREAS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a terminal neurodegenerative disease that leads to loss of muscle strength and coordination, causing people affected to lose their ability to perform routine tasks of daily living and eventually lose control of motor functions such as swallowing and breathing; and

WHEREAS, for reasons not clearly understood, and unrelated to specific duties, eras or locations of service, military service itself is a risk factor for future diagnosis of ALS; and

WHEREAS, a veteran who served between 1910 and 1982 is about 1.5 times more likely to be diagnosed with ALS compared with someone who never served in the military; and

WHEREAS, current law and regulations direct the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide presumptive service-connected compensation for section 3.318, title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, and

WHEREAS, the average age of patients with ALS is 55 years old, and ALS has a poor prognosis, with life expectancy after diagnosis ranging from three to five years for most individuals; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no "cure" for ALS, but some treatments can slow progression or ease symptoms, which leads to improved quality of life; and

WHEREAS, some promising investigational drugs and therapies, including stem cell therapy, have demonstrated increased survival and function for people diagnosed with ALS, but veterans have not had optimal access to these breakthrough therapies through the VA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, encourages the VA to seek out collaborative partnerships to allow veterans

to participate in multisite clinical drug and treatment trials that will expand access to breakthrough treatment for interventions intended to prevent, diagnose, mitigate, treat or cure ALS; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA should prioritize research into the causes and effective treatment of ALS as a service-connected condition disproportionately affecting veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 478
DEVELOP CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES ON PREVENTION, EARLY
DETECTION AND INTERVENTION FOR LUNG CANCER

WHEREAS, lung cancer is the second-most common cancer in men and women and the leading cause of death from cancer; and

WHEREAS, veterans are more likely to be exposed to hazardous and potentially carcinogenic agents such as dioxin, burn pits and environmental agents than non-military personnel; and

WHEREAS, individuals may not experience or recognize symptoms of lung cancer until the disease has progressed to an advanced stage; and

WHEREAS, even when lung cancer does cause symptoms, many people may mistake them for acute health conditions such as infections, which may delay the diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, based on findings that low-dose CT scans (LDCT) caught more early-stage lung cancer than chest X-rays, the American Cancer Society has developed guidance for screening high-risk individuals-including use of annual LDCT screening for people at higher risk for developing lung cancer; and

WHEREAS, early detection may significantly increase the likelihood of successful treatment of lung cancer; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, supports the Department of Veterans Affairs developing and implementing new clinical guidance on the prevention, detection and treatment of lung cancer, including the appropriate use of LDCT scans for early detection of lung cancer in at-risk populations.

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RESOLUTION NO. 479
URGE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO APPLY
A CONSISTENT COORDINATED CARE POLICY FOR ENROLLED
VETERANS WITH A HOME RESIDENCE IN TWO STATES

WHEREAS, many service-connected disabled veterans temporarily split their principal residence between two locations; and

WHEREAS, coordination and continuity of care are core features of high-quality primary care and have been shown to offer significant benefits, including lower rates of hospitalization and lower mortality; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy defining how patients are assigned to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) primary care providers states that, in general, each veteran receiving VA primary care must be assigned a single primary care provider within the VA health care system; and

WHEREAS, under VHA Handbook 1101.11(3), veterans who spend a significant part of the year living between two regions and who have complex health care needs requiring close ongoing care management may have primary care providers assigned at two geographically distant facilities; and

WHEREAS, some service-connected veterans who would otherwise be eligible for a secondary VA primary care provider may be denied this critical service; and

WHEREAS, many service-connected veterans are unaware that their VA provider may assess their need for assignment to another facility to manage complex health needs to better coordinate execution of a personal health care plan between the preferred and alternate VA facilities; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3-6, 2024, urges the VA to improve its care coordination policy for enrolled veterans with a home residence in two states, especially service-disabled veterans with complex medical needs, who may require the assignment of two primary care providers.

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RESOLUTION NO. 491
REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO ADDRESS THE
NEED FOR TELEPHONE ACCESS TO HOSPITAL SERVICES AND BENEFITS
FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED VETERANS TRYING TO OBTAIN SAID HEALTH
CARE AND BENEFITS VIA LAND LINE OR MOBILE PHONE DEVICES

WHEREAS, United States Code § 12102 defines the term “disability” under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual ; and

WHEREAS, in enacting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Congress intended that the Act “provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities” and provide broad coverage; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is required as a public entity to follow the precepts of the ADA; and

Veterans must use a telephonic device and navigate the automated system with keypad tones to contact the VA; and

WHEREAS, these actions are prohibitive where numeric depressions on a keypad such as a land line or mobile device are difficult if not overwhelming for a visually impaired veteran; and

WHEREAS, a second person is often required to assist the veteran in initiating first contact counter to the precepts of the ADA; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop and implement a consistent policy requiring all Department of Veterans Affairs facilities, Administration offices and call centers with optional paths for telephonic initial contact.

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RESOLUTION NO. 543
IMPROVE TIMELY REIMBURSEMENTS BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS FOR PURCHASED CARE, PROTECT VETERANS FROM DEBT
COLLECTION AND ADVERSE CREDIT REPORTING FROM SUCH CARE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized to provide a full continuum of health care to all service-connected veterans enrolled in the VA health care system, including preventive, primary, acute, specialty and rehabilitative care as well as pharmaceutical, mental health and readjustment counseling services; and

WHEREAS, to ensure veterans are able to receive timely comprehensive care, Congress authorized numerous VA programs since the early 1920s to purchase care for veterans from non-VA community providers; and

WHEREAS, according to the Government Accountability Office, the VA's use of purchased care programs has increased 82% since the access to care crisis in 2014; and

WHEREAS, veterans who are treated by non-VA community providers under any of the VA's community care programs should not be under any financial obligation to defray the full costs of VA-authorized care; and

WHEREAS, the VA MISSION Act (Public Law 115–182) amended most but not all of the VA's community care programs and instituted standards for the VA to promptly pay for care provided to veterans by community care providers; and

WHEREAS, in innumerable cases, service-connected veterans have been billed directly for care provided by community providers despite the VA's obligation to pay in a timely fashion; and

WHEREAS, in some cases, veterans do not receive timely billing or copayment-due notification for services rendered through the VA or a network community care provider for more than six months or a year, to include services for emergency care or transportation; and

WHEREAS, should service-connected veterans be without the means to rectify debt assigned by community providers when VA payment is deficient or delinquent, providers are referring such debt to debt collection agencies as well as reporting such debt to credit reporting agencies, adversely affecting these veterans' credit worthiness when in fact no justification supports such collection actions or credit reporting against veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to improve its administrative practices to promptly pay non-VA community providers for care under all of the VA's purchased care program; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to enact legislation requiring VA to reimburse or require non-VA community providers to forgive any veterans' copayments for community care, including emergency care or transportation, that are billed more than 180 days after services are rendered; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges Congress to enact legislation to properly protect veterans' credit ratings and require the VA to protect veterans from collections actions against service-disabled veterans because of delinquent or delayed payment to non-VA community providers.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 548
SUPPORT NAMING THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MARE ISLAND CLINIC IN VALLEJO, CALIFORNIA AS THE
“DELPHINE METCALF-FOSTER VA CLINIC”

WHEREAS, Delphine Metcalf-Foster is a lifelong resident of Vallejo, California; a disabled U.S. Army Reserve veteran of Operation Desert Storm; a Bronze Star Medal recipient; retired as a first sergeant (E-8) in 1996; and a life member of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and DAV; and

WHEREAS, Delphine Metcalf-Foster was the first African American woman Commander of the DAV Department of California in 2004–2005 and National Commander in 2017–18; and

WHEREAS, as a past or present member of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Advisory Committee on Women Veterans and the VA Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, she was very instrumental in the development of more than 60 established policies that are currently effective today at Women Veterans Clinics throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, she has also testified at House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearings advocating to improve outreach to and services for women and all veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Department of California Commanders of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and DAV have all written letters to U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson and John Garamendi to support this naming effort; and

WHEREAS, the California State Commanders Veterans Council, which is recognized in state law as the collective voice for California's 23 major veterans service organizations, also supports this effort via votervoice.net/iframes/CSCVC/Campaigns/98358/Respond; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports naming the Veterans Affairs Mare Island Clinic in Vallejo, California as the “Delphine Metcalf-Foster VA Clinic.”

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 549
SUPPORT CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS WITH DEPENDENTS

WHEREAS, title 38, United States Code, § 1709C, “Assistance for childcare for certain veterans receiving health care,” currently calls for the provision of child care for certain veterans receiving eligible categories of health care services; and

WHEREAS, Sec. 1709C(b) limits assistance provided for child care to qualified veterans who (1) receive the types of health care services described in subsequent subsection (c)(2) at a facility of the Department; and (2) requires travel to and return from such facility for the receipt of such health care services; and

WHEREAS, Sec. 1709C(c) defines a qualified veteran as a veteran who (1) is the primary caretaker of a child or children; and (2)(A) receives from the Department (i) regular mental health care services; (ii) intensive mental health care services; or (iii) such other intensive health care services that the Secretary determines that provision of assistance to the veteran to obtain child care would improve access to such health care services by the veteran; or (B) is in need of regular or intensive mental health care services from the Department, and but for lack of child care services, would receive such health care services from the Department; and

WHEREAS, the current law significantly limits the categories of veterans eligible for child care; and

WHEREAS, Sec. 1709C(c)(1) should be amended so as to include granting child care assistance to all service-connected disabled veterans regardless of whether they are the primary caretaker of a child or children or the types of medical care they receive; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to amend the definition of “Qualified Veterans” in title 38, United States Code, Sec. 1709C(c)(2) to permit all service-connected disabled veterans access to child care assistance for all medical appointments at any Veterans Health Administration facility where a veteran receives medical care for a service-connected medical condition.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 583
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH PROCEDURES TO REQUIRE THAT
A VETERAN PROVIDE WRITTEN CONSENT FOR THE PRESCRIPTION OF
CERTAIN DRUGS PRESCRIBED BY PHYSICIANS AND PHARMACISTS

WHEREAS, Black Box medications are required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to carry special warnings for medications that have a high potential for serious safety risks; and

WHEREAS, warnings communicate potentially rare but dangerous side effects, or indicate important instructions for the safe use of the drug; and

WHEREAS, many of these drugs are prescribed, and suicidal ideation is commonly one of their primary side effects; and

WHEREAS, medications have important applications, but vulnerable populations should explicitly know the risks associated with taking them; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook notes, “veterans must be informed of the side effects of and the treatment options for medications and treatments they are prescribed;” and

WHEREAS, clinicians should inform veterans of non-pharmaceutical alternative treatment options to treat chronic injuries or illnesses; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that requires all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care practitioners provide patient (and/or surrogate) clear and concise explanations for condition(s) or diagnosis(es) and recommended treatment options or procedure to ensure the veteran can make well-informed health care decisions; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VHA obtain written informed consent from veterans that acknowledges they understand the risks associated with these drugs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that clinicians are providing all vital information about these medications, including risks and side effects, considering all available evidence-based treatment options and medications to each veteran to minimize or eliminate the potential risk of suicide; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that veterans be provided education on the importance of adhering to treatment regimens and prepared for what they may expect during treatment; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all VA health care systems provide oversight and accountability that all practitioners understand and apply all aspects of policies that govern the expectations and standards of informed consent for clinical treatments and procedures.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 584
ENSURE EQUITY IN QUALITY AND ACCESS FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND VETERANS’ COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM PROVIDERS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) use of community care is rapidly increasing in terms of the portion of the budget it expends on such care and as a share of all care provided to enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 115–182, the VA MISSION Act of 2018, requires the VA to assess the availability of appointments in the Veterans Community Care Program provider network that meet a veteran’s particular needs prior to scheduling that appointment in the community, but the VA has not had data to make such determinations; and

WHEREAS, much of the information Congress intended the VA to use in electing use of community providers under Public Law 115–182, including assessing comparable quality and timeliness for certain service lines, is not systematically collected by these providers; and

WHEREAS, VA providers have access to special training and clinical practice guidelines for certain types of issues veterans experience or are significantly more at risk of experiencing due to military service, including post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, blast injuries, the aftereffects of military sexual trauma, certain toxic exposures and suicidal ideation; and

WHEREAS, a recent RAND report found that many community providers express concerns about being adequately prepared to address some of the issues veterans experience as a result of military service; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a requirement that the VA contracts with care intermediaries such as TRIWEST, Optum and Humana require their network providers to collect information comparable to standardized outpatient data that the VA collects including process, outcome and access data; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that providers be required to receive VA training in basic VA benefits and services and in best practices managing common veterans conditions including suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma, traumatic brain injuries and toxic exposures.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 585

PROVIDE RESEARCH AND ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE USE OF IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGIES LIKE VIRTUAL REALITY AND AUGMENTED REALITY, SOMETIMES COLLECTIVELY CALLED EXTENDED REALITY

WHEREAS, within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), as many as 50% of veterans experience chronic pain; and

WHEREAS, veterans living with chronic pain are at an increased risk for suicide because it can lead to other risk factors, such as depression, anxiety and PTSD; and

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), virtual reality (VR) already has more than 40 documented indications or different applications within VA health care; and

WHEREAS, early data from VA immersive technology implementations has already showed promising results in the area of chronic pain with participants seeing notable improvement including a 28% reduction in pain intensity and 28% decrease in anxiety; and

WHEREAS, VA immersive technology is also seeing positive responses for postoperative pain management that can provide a nonpharmacological option to postoperative care; and

WHEREAS, immersive technologies that augment evidence-based practices such as positive distraction, cognitive behavioral therapy, prolonged exposure and other practices with engaging modalities like VR and augmented reality, are leading an expansion of alternative therapies with increased access and improved outcomes in veterans' care; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports VA research in immersive technology and supports funding for hardware and software for use and implementation of immersive technologies in conjunction with evidence-based therapies.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 587

REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COOPERATE WITH FISHER HOUSE FUNDRAISING

WHEREAS, Fisher House provides an important service for the family members of veterans; and

WHEREAS, family support is essential for healing; and

WHEREAS, community hotels are both expensive and may be a safety risk; and

WHEREAS, Fisher House requires no out-of-pocket expense to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) nor the veteran's family members; and

WHEREAS, Fisher House provides a place for family members to have proper nutrition and rest; and

WHEREAS, DAV feels that providing the best care for our veterans involves their family members' support and education; and

WHEREAS, DAV is fully in support of Fisher House as an essential tool of care for the veteran; and

WHEREAS, not all VA hospitals are allowing a Fisher House; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, requests all VA medical centers to fully cooperate with constituents to permit the building and fundraising for Fisher House at every VA that has a greater than 50-mile driving distance to any VA medical center in their state and to cooperate and support the building of such a facility and to fully support local constituents in all efforts to raise the associated costs.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 588
SUPPORT ADEQUATE FUNDING TO SUSTAIN THE READJUSTMENT
COUNSELING SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND ITS VET CENTER PROGRAM

WHEREAS, in 1979, Congress authorized the establishment of the Readjustment Counseling Service, an independent counseling activity within the then-Veterans Administration's Department of Medicine and Surgery; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, the Veterans Administration opened the first "Vet Center" to provide readjustment services and psychological counseling to Vietnam combat veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions related to combat exposure and their experiences in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, the Vet Centers, now numbering 300 locations, 83 mobile vet centers and 19 vet center outstations nationwide, have proven to be a most useful and effective tool to assist veterans of all eras who seek care for issues associated with exposure to traumatic combat situations, challenges with reintegrating into families and communities, and military sexual trauma, in addition to other problems and to certain family members; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide cost-effective and highly beneficial services, including counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other readjustment challenges, suicide prevention and crisis intervention, marriage and family counseling, and family bereavement counseling beneficial to recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Vet Center program has been successful counseling veterans from all prior conflicts needing such readjustment services, including World War II, the Korean War, the war in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War, and veterans of combat service in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers lead all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) mental health programs in conducting veteran-to-veteran peer counseling services, wherein veterans who have themselves experienced post-deployment mental health issues related to their military experience are trained to provide counseling to those still suffering ill effects; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers are now charged with selecting and administering the peer retreats in both gender-exclusive and mixed-gender groups of veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, commends the work of the Readjustment Counseling Service and of its Vet Centers of the VA, and encourages the Vet Centers to maintain funding levels commensurate with the growth in veterans' demand for services and to accommodate outreach to meet unmet needs of additional veterans within the Vet Center catchment areas.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 589
ENSURE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FACILITIES AND INFORMATION
RESOURCES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 serves as the basis for allowing individuals with disabilities to enjoy mainstream access to opportunities for employment, commerce and governmental activities; and

WHEREAS, ADA requires new construction projects to use barrier-free design and older facilities to use modifications to allow access to individuals with disabilities including those using wheelchairs to areas that fulfill the primary function of the business; and

WHEREAS, access to some Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health facilities, services and equipment remains problematic for some disabled veterans using wheelchairs and service dogs; and

WHEREAS, section 504 of the American Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that reasonable accommodations be made to allow people with disabilities to access benefits and services available to individuals without disabilities including for written and electronic materials; and

WHEREAS, recent reports have found only about 8% of VA websites are accessible to those with visual impairments; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, calls on the VA to ensure its physical space comports to regulations for barrier-free design and address other environment of care deficiencies that impact patients' safety and comfort, and that it has equipment necessary to address the needs of veterans with disabilities; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA should create project milestones and timelines to ensure that all of its primary websites, documents and social media allow veterans with visual impairment to access information within the next five years.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 590
SUPPORT A CONSISTENT BENEFIT FOR SERVICE AND GUIDE DOGS PRESCRIBED
BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PROVIDERS AND EXAMINE THE
BENEFITS OF TRAINING SERVICE DOGS FOR DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, trained guide dogs and other trained service dogs can have a significant role in restoring or maintaining functionality and promoting maximal independence of individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, some veterans with disabilities such as blindness, deafness, mental illness, and epilepsy and other seizure disorders are able to better engage in their recovery and live more independently when prescribed service and guide dogs; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) prescribes the use of guide and service dogs to veterans enrolled in VA health care when therapeutically indicated to perform specific tasks to allow veterans to restore or maintain function or maximize independence; and

WHEREAS, the VA provides a veterinary benefit for all prescribed service dogs meeting the standards of certain accredited training organizations; and

WHEREAS, the VA has recently completed a multisite, multiyear study of the use of service dogs for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder compared to those with emotional support dogs which found that veterans paired with service dogs had more significant reductions in the severity of symptomology and suicidal behavior and ideation; and

WHEREAS, the VA is experimenting with dog training programs, led by veterans for veterans, to determine if the training of service dogs itself is a therapeutic method to reduce symptoms in veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the VA to continue research to determine the most efficacious use of service dogs for defined populations and, in particular, for veterans with mental health conditions and to broadly publish the results of that research; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA determine any additional benefit for veterans with mental health issues involved in training service dogs for themselves or other veterans with disabilities; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VA ensure that any veteran for whom a service dog is ordered receive the dog at no cost, including reimbursement for any follow-up training deemed appropriate, and a veterinary benefit for the life of that service dog.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 591
SUPPORT TOP PRIORITY ACCESS FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS
WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has issued national directives and policies to affirm its commitment to providing top-priority access to hospital care and medical services to veterans with service-connected disabilities, regardless of the percentage assigned to the service-connected disability rating, in absence of compelling medical reasons to the contrary; and

WHEREAS, many VA facilities are struggling to fulfill this mandate because of budget pressures, insufficient local resources and demand exceeding capacity because of increasing patient workloads; and

WHEREAS, DAV continues to receive complaints from service-connected veterans who are being denied priority access to VA health care services or report their access to care is being delayed; and

WHEREAS, due to inadequate resources, VHA at times has been forced to establish waiting lists and implement other types of health care rationing, absent compelling medical reasons; and

WHEREAS, the VA is poised to realign and expand availability of health care services to meet the diverse needs of future veterans; reform its management by increasing efficiency, transparency and accountability to become more veteran-centric; and restructure all its community care programs into flexible and responsive integrated networks to deliver high-value quality care; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports strict enforcement by the VHA, including VHA network and medical center directors, of governing policies providing service-connected veterans priority access to care, unless compelling medical reasons affecting other veterans prevent such priority from being extended to them.

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RESOLUTION NO. 592
ENSURE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MAY NOT DENY A VETERAN ANY BENEFITS IF THAT VETERAN PARTICIPATES IN STATE-APPROVED MARIJUANA PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the DAV wholeheartedly supports our military, veterans and their families; and WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should be prohibited from denying a veteran any VA benefit due to participation in a state-approved marijuana program; and

WHEREAS, for those participating in these approved programs, the VA must ensure its health care providers discuss marijuana use with such veterans and adjust treatment plans accordingly, as well as record such use in the veteran's medical record; and

WHEREAS, the VA shall authorize physicians and other VA health care providers to provide recommendations to veterans who are residents of states with approved marijuana programs; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the VA shall authorize physicians and other health care providers to continue to provide comprehensive health care for veterans who are participating in state-approved marijuana programs; NOW

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VA health care providers discuss marijuana use with veterans and adjust treatment accordingly.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 597
EXTEND APPRECIATION TO THE CARL T. HAYDEN VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE 2024 DAV NATIONAL CONVENTION

WHEREAS, the cooperation and professionalism extended by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical personnel to the delegates and guests of the 2024 National Convention of the DAV (Disabled American Veterans) and Auxiliary was laudable; and

WHEREAS, many of the delegates to our National Convention were in need of immediate medical treatment and required the assistance of prosthetic equipment to attend the National Convention; and

WHEREAS, in response to these requests, the health care officials from the Carl T. Hayden Veterans' Administration Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona, staffed and maintained a high-quality outpatient clinic and prosthetic service within the Phoenix Convention Center; and

WHEREAS, the medical care and prosthetic services rendered to the delegates to this National Convention were extended in a highly compassionate and professional manner; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, expresses its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Carl T. Hayden Veterans' Administration Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona, for the professional and skillful health care delivered to the delegates to the 2024 National Convention and for contributing to the overall success of this Convention.

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(Whereupon, the Committee on Hospital and Voluntary Services chair withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: You have heard the motion. May I have a second?

MR. MARIO HARGOVE: Mic 4.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 4.

MR. HARGOVE: Mario Hargove, Chapter 15, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I second that motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: In accordance with Rule 9 now is the time for any rejected resolutions to be read. Are there any rejected resolutions you wish read? Hearing none, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Committee on Hospital and Voluntary Services chair withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I would like to call upon Chairperson Leena Dees for the report of the Committee on General Resolutions and Membership.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Committee on General Resolutions and Membership chair advanced to the podium.)

GENERAL RESOLUTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN LEENA DEES: Comrade Commander and delegates. Commander, before I start my report I would like to thank DAV for bringing women's veterans issues to the forefront and helping us to be seen as we continue to be the fastest growing demographic within our veteran community.

It is with diligence and perseverance that we continue to make strides in the right direction. As one of the younger veterans, I am inspired by the amazing women in the DAV who continue to carry the torch into the future with our organization. My hope for us is that we continue to carry on the legacies of the inspirational women that have come before us.

The National Convention Committee on General Resolutions was called to order on August 3rd, 2024, by Committee advisors Marquis Barefield and Naomi Mathis.

The first order of business was the election of Convention Committee chairman and secretary. Leena Dees was elected as chairman. And Karl Kurtz was elected as secretary.

The Committee then proceeded to review the resolutions submitted. And I will now report to you the resolutions recommended for adoption by this national convention. For the purpose of saving time I will read only the number and purpose of the resolutions.

Resolution Number 6, support renewed Prisoner of War/Missing in Action discussions;

Resolution 13, support legislation to assign a VA liaison at each VA Regional Office;

Resolution 48, encourage all disabled veterans to become registered voters and vote;

Resolution 49, support the continued growth of Veterans' Treatment Courts for justice-involved veterans;

Resolution 104, support legislation to improve and reform the National Cemetery Association – Administration, pardon me;

Resolution 105, adequately fund the NCA State Cemetery Grant Program;

Resolution 106, providing scam and fraud protection to veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors;

Resolution 135, provide weekend burials at the National Cemetery;

Resolution 136, support former prisoner of war slave labor claims against Japanese firms;

Resolution 137, support fair air travel for disabled veterans;

Resolution 138, support meaningful accountability measures but with due process for employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Resolution 183, condemn public desecration of the flag of the United States; (Applause)

Resolution 185, seek the immediate release of any Americans who may still be held captive following any war and the return and identification of remains of any American who has died during these wars;

Resolution 186, support the construction of a courthouse for the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims;

Resolution 187, oppose the authorization of use of members of the Armed Forces for human experimentation without their knowledge and informed consent;

Resolution 215, honorably-discharged veterans would have firearm identification cards and associated Second Amendment licenses such as, but not only, license to carry fees waived;

Resolution 216, establish a free national/veteran's fishing license that applies to one state of the choice by the veteran with the ability to add other states for a small fee, such as \$10 per state, which could be waived by the particular state, if so chosen;

Resolution 232, support legislation to guarantee United States citizenship to honorably-discharged, service-disabled, non-citizen veterans; (Applause)

Resolution 239, support legislation to regulate the VA's use of artificial intelligence, AI, and automated tools in medical and benefit settings while requiring adequate oversight and transparency in the use and outcomes of AI implementation;

Resolution 388, expand the travel area that service-connected veterans having a permanent disability rated 100 percent may travel from continental United States to continental United States and overseas;

Resolution 389, expand space-available air travel to caregivers and dependents of eligible veterans;

Resolution 390, support legislation to protect honorably-discharged non-citizen veterans from deportation while applying for citizenship;

Resolution 391, support federal laws, regulations, programs and policies that enhance, and oppose those that diminish, the DAV's ability to fulfill its mission of assisting service-disabled veterans, their families, and survivors;

Resolution 444, extend military commissary and exchange privilege and space-available air travel to certain service-connected disabled veterans;

Resolution 499, support for Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command;

Resolution 582, support legislation to require Secretary of Transportation to annually report the aviation consumer complaints related to passengers with disabilities;

Resolution 598, appreciation to all those who are responsible for the success of the 2024 National Convention;

Resolution 599, appreciation to the Phoenix Convention Center for the success of the 2024 National Convention;

Resolution 600, express appreciation to National Commander Nancy G. Espinosa.

Comrade Commander, this completes the report on the Committee on General Resolutions.

On behalf of the Committee I move for the adoption of these resolutions and that the Committee be discharged with the thanks of the national convention. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Committee on General Resolutions and Membership chair withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 6

SUPPORT RENEWED PRISONER-OF-WAR/MISSING-IN-ACTION DISCUSSIONS

WHEREAS, DAV has long been and is now deeply committed to accounting as fully as possible for United States personnel previously listed as prisoners, missing and unaccounted for from all of our nation's past wars; and

WHEREAS, DAV recognizes the utility and importance of bilateral discussions, separate from those held on strategic issues, but fully integrated with broader policy and national security priorities in an effort to reach agreement for proceeding on a humanitarian basis with prisoner-of-war/missing-in-action accounting cooperation; and

WHEREAS, DAV also recognizes the lead time required between renewing bilateral discussions to reach humanitarian agreements and restoring and increasing unilateral; bilateral; and, as needed, multilateral field recovery operations; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports renewing and expanding direct bilateral humanitarian efforts for the purpose of restoring and improving U.S. agreements and processes with counterpart nations required to account as fully as possible for unreturned American military personnel.

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RESOLUTION NO. 13

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ASSIGN A DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) LIAISON AT EACH VA REGIONAL OFFICE

WHEREAS, due to the passage of the Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has substantially increased hiring of claims processors; and

WHEREAS, VA has been implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to review and process a veteran claim; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has moved claims processing to a National Work Queue, allowing a veteran's claim to be worked on by any VA Regional Office (VARO) across the country, eliminating the Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) from having a direct point of contact (POC) at their VARO to present and discuss these issues in real time with VA prior to the adjudication of a claim; and

WHEREAS, the veteran's home VARO holds no jurisdiction over that veteran's claim, leaving the VSO with no POC and no accountability; and

WHEREAS, resulting in only very time consuming and frustrating options available, which causes significant hardships on the disabled veteran due to the delays and possible mistakes made by the claims processors; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports that VBA create a VSO liaison position at each VARO, to allow veterans' representatives to have a POC for any claims processing issues.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 48
ENCOURAGE ALL DISABLED VETERANS TO BECOME
REGISTERED VOTERS AND VOTE

WHEREAS, members of DAV served their country during time of war in order to preserve the rights and privileges of life in this land of the free; and

WHEREAS, one of the most precious of those rights is the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress and the Administration have failed to fulfill their obligation to our nation's disabled veterans, providing inadequate funding for veterans benefits and health care; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress and the Administration have targeted veterans programs for unwarranted spending cuts and reductions under the mistaken and misguided theory that veterans do not base their votes on veterans issues; and

WHEREAS, the failure of disabled veterans to register and vote will result in the perpetuation of this theory; and

WHEREAS, because of their disabilities, disabled veterans have more difficulty than their nondisabled peers in complying with some of the stricter requirements in voter registration laws; and

WHEREAS, veterans, their families and all Americans concerned about veterans issues need to make their voices heard by becoming registered voters and exercising their votes in local, state and federal elections; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, encourages all DAV members to register to vote and thereby strengthen our organization's ability to preserve and improve our system of veterans benefits and services; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all DAV departments and chapters initiate and operate voter registration drives targeted at increasing voter registration among veterans and their families; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all DAV departments, chapters and members are encouraged to ensure that all veterans and their family members are able to access polling places to vote.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 49
SUPPORT THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF VETERANS TREATMENT
COURTS FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERANS

WHEREAS, many military service members and veterans return from today's overseas combat engagements with signature wounds of polytrauma, traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health and repatriation challenges, and veterans from earlier eras have absorbed their own signature disabilities, including PTSD; and

WHEREAS, some veterans resort to overuse of substances in their attempts to cope with their chronic physical and mental health challenges, other barriers and obstacles, and pain; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of chronic substance use disorder or lasting residuals of combat exposure, a minority of veterans display antisocial and even criminal behaviors and thus become involved with law enforcement and justice systems; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts evolved from a proven national model of diversionary drug courts and mental health courts to address the specific situations of veterans and to maximize efficiency of available resources while making use of the distinct military culture to which veterans are accustomed; and

WHEREAS, in a 2016 report, the Government Accountability Office found large increases in workloads and heard reports from justice-involved veterans indicating that there is a need to add staff and resources to the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, in addition to improving effectiveness by developing and monitoring goals for its coordinators; and

WHEREAS, many justice-involved veterans are eligible for the financial benefits, social supports and health care services available through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and through other national, state and local veterans programs; and

WHEREAS, grouping troubled veterans together within specific court dockets expedites access to helpful resources and promotes the camaraderie and mutual support found among veterans; and

WHEREAS, veterans in general deeply value their military experiences and share an inimitable bond with their peers, and the veterans courts build upon this bond by enabling veterans to proceed through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and by pairing together veterans and mentors; and

WHEREAS, years of experience from the Veterans Treatment Courts now in existence nationwide have produced a statistically significant reduction of recidivism rates in veterans compared to persons in other treatment courts and individuals not involved in any sort of alternative or diversionary court; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the continued growth of the Veterans Treatment Courts throughout our nation and urges adequate support for the increasing resource needs of the VA program in addition to identification of appropriate goals and metrics to determine the programs' effectiveness; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all DAV departments and chapters are encouraged to support additional veterans courts and work with local VA officials and law enforcement to build support for the establishment of these courts; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls on departments and chapters to work in support of state legislation where necessary to authorize veterans courts.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 104
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROTECT, IMPROVE AND REFORM
THE NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) through the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) operates 155 National Cemeteries and 34 soldiers' lots and monument sites in 42 states and Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, more than 4 million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA's national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, the NCA is charged with maintaining nearly 23,000 acres of land across the country; and

WHEREAS, with the demand for burial space increasing as the nation's veteran population is aging, the NCA must have the appropriate funds and resources for expansions, maintenance and upgrades; and

WHEREAS, veterans and their families should have ease of access, eligibility, and expansion of burial benefits including headstones, markers and medallions; and

WHEREAS, the NCA frequently receives less funding than is recommended, which makes it difficult for them to maintain and grow the current cemeteries, let alone add new initiatives to improve the final resting place for veterans and their families; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to adequately fund the NCA, fund cemetery expansions, reform eligibility for burials and entitlement to headstones, markers and medallions.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 105
PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL CEMETERY
ADMINISTRATION'S STATE CEMETERY GRANT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the State Cemetery Grant Program is a critical resource that allows states to expand options for veteran internments; and

WHEREAS, partnerships between the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and tribal, state and local cemeteries are critical in ensuring that veterans have a burial selection within 75 miles of their homes; and

WHEREAS, local cemeteries can expand veteran burial options by raising half of the funds required to establish or expand a veterans' cemetery, work with local government agencies and zoning commissions, and complete the grassroots steps needed for the expansion and the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program grants provide the remaining funding; and

WHEREAS, before the NCA can provide a grant, the cemetery must secure legislative authority and matching appropriations from its state, territorial, or tribal government; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) annual budget has historically underfunded this program; for instance, in 2023, there were 43 locally-approved grant applications totaling over \$111 million, yet VA's budget only accounted for \$55 million; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, there were 69 locally approved grant applications at nearly \$300 million; however, VA requested only \$60 million for fiscal year 2025; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports funding all NCA Veterans Cemetery Grants Program applications that have local support and matching funds to ensure all veterans have burial options within 75 miles of their home.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 106
PROVIDE SCAM AND FRAUD PROTECTION FOR VETERANS,
THEIR FAMILIES, CAREGIVERS AND SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, veterans and their benefits are the targets of many types of fraud, to include mail, telephone, online fraud and identity theft; and

WHEREAS, according to the Federal Trade Commission, over 74,000 military retirees and veterans reported instances of fraud or identity theft in 2023 alone, resulting in a collective loss of \$350 million in earned benefits; and

WHEREAS, our nation's veterans need consistent guidance on how to identify, report, and avoid fraud and scam attempts; and

WHEREAS, currently the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not have a single source or office responsible to identify or report on fraud and scams aimed at veterans; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to require VA to create an office to provide protection from fraud and scams by providing veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors with training on how to identify and report frauds and scams.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 135
PROVIDE WEEKEND BURIALS AT NATIONAL CEMETERIES

WHEREAS, scheduling a weekend burial at a national cemetery is not current policy; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 114–315 requires the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to study the feasibility of weekend burials; and

WHEREAS, NCA operates 135 national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, available cemetery benefits include a gravesite in any national cemetery with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial certificate, at no cost to the family; and

WHEREAS, NCA works to continually improve customer satisfaction, meeting the wishes of veterans and their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, providing weekend burial at a national cemetery eases scheduling and lightens the burden on veterans' survivors, many of whom may need to travel great distances to pay their final respects and honor their loved one as they are laid to rest; and

WHEREAS, DAV and other veterans service organizations often provide volunteers who conduct military honors at funeral service burials; and

WHEREAS, weekend burial at national cemeteries will allow more volunteers an opportunity to participate in military honor guards at funeral services due to scheduling; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks legislation that would authorize weekend burials for service- connected veterans at cemeteries operated by NCA.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 136
SUPPORT FORMER PRISONER-OF-WAR SLAVE LABOR
CLAIMS AGAINST JAPANESE FIRMS

WHEREAS, noncitizen service members have played an important role in the United States military since the Revolutionary War, and thousands continue to serve honorably today; and

WHEREAS, persons with noncitizen status who are permanent residents of the United States have permission to work in the United States, and those who have obtained a high school diploma and speak English are eligible to enlist in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, current law allows noncitizen veterans to apply for expedited citizenship if they meet age and length of service requirements and demonstrate English proficiency and knowledge of the history and government of the United States—however, meeting these criteria does not guarantee citizenship will be awarded; and

WHEREAS, honorably discharged veterans with disabilities due to military service, service-related disabilities pending awards of service connection, or disabilities incurred during or as a result of military service but not awarded service connection should be guaranteed citizenship for their honorable service; and

WHEREAS, these veterans should have the opportunity to live without fear of deportation from the country they fought for; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to provide honorably discharged veterans with disabilities as a result of their military service, regardless if service connection has been established for such conditions, guaranteed citizenship.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 137 SUPPORT FAIR AIR TRAVEL FOR DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, travel as a disabled veteran can be more expensive; and

WHEREAS, airlines do not have to pay for damage to walkers, wheelchairs or other assistance aids; and

WHEREAS, there is no way to note without calling the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) call center for each airline to get aid in booking air travel; and

WHEREAS, there is no thought to the need of service dogs and leg space for disabled veterans flying; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports an easier way to book travel to show disabled veteran status in need of extra leg room with no extra charge and reasonable reimbursement of medical equipment or rental cost if damage occurs during transportation; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that legislation be made to assist in ease of travel for disabled veterans with caregivers and/or service dogs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that veterans have the ability to identify themselves online as a disabled veteran with an ADA chatbot as they book online tickets as to not have to pay a higher cost.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 138 SUPPORT MEANINGFUL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, BUT WITH DUE PROCESS, FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, in order to ensure that veterans receive the benefits and services they have earned, every Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee, manager and leader must faithfully fulfill their duties and responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, when VA employees fail veterans due to poor performance or misconduct, these individuals must be held accountable for such failures; and

WHEREAS, accountability constitutes a range of actions, including remedial training; demotion; suspension; and, when justified, termination; and

WHEREAS, the VA's long-term future must foster an environment in which the best and brightest individuals choose VA employment over other federal or private employers; and

WHEREAS, poor performance and misconduct cannot be tolerated, but all VA employees must be confident that fairness and due process govern selection, promotion, demotion, sanction or termination; and

WHEREAS, without such assurances of fairness and due process in the workplace, talented individuals may not entertain working in or remaining at the VA; and

WHEREAS, pending legislative proposals before Congress would heighten accountability; however, any bill enacted by Congress should include standards by which accountability can be measured while ensuring due process and fairness for VA employees subject to such standards; and

WHEREAS, civil service protections enacted decades ago came about as a consequence of cronyism, politicization and ill treatment of civil servants, including terminations for almost any reason or no reason; and

WHEREAS, ensuring that the civil service remains free of political influence is a principle that must be protected to guarantee that VA employees are never appointed, demoted or terminated for political or personal reasons; and

WHEREAS, sanctions against VA employees based on performance must be made only if measurable performance standards have been clearly communicated but still violated; and

WHEREAS, VA managers must be empowered to use existing policies in a timely manner to sanction employees who fail to meet their documented performance standards; and

WHEREAS, applying sanctions exclusively to VA employees in the wake of a scandal is in contravention of civil service rules that regulate the entire federal workforce; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, insists any legislation changing the existing employment protections in the VA must strike a balance between holding civil servants accountable for their performance while maintaining the VA as an employer of choice for the best and brightest.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 183

CONDEMN PUBLIC DESECRATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court, by a 5–4 decision, ruled that public desecration of the American flag, as a form of free speech and expression, is legal and permissible; and

WHEREAS, the American flag—Old Glory—is our national ensign, the proud and beautiful symbol of our country's precious, free heritage; and

WHEREAS, this symbol, in the form of our irreplaceable Stars and Stripes, has been carried and defended in battle, revered and cherished by citizens, and viewed as a beacon of hope and fulfillment by all the world since it was first unfurled at the birth of our nation; and

WHEREAS, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and was not intended by our Founding Fathers to enable individuals—who enjoy unfettered freedom to express their views, no matter how abhorrent, in both oral and written form—to publicly and contemptuously desecrate our beloved flag; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, condemns any individual or group who at any time publicly and willfully desecrates the flag of the United States.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 185

SEEK THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ANY AMERICANS WHO MAY STILL BE HELD CAPTIVE FOLLOWING ANY WAR AND THE RETURN AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE REMAINS OF ANY AMERICANS WHO DIED DURING THESE WARS

WHEREAS, the members of DAV are deeply concerned for the thousands of American service members still unaccounted for in the aftermath of wars; and

WHEREAS, numerous high-level American delegations, including members of Congress, have visited Southeast Asia in continuing efforts to solve the mystery of the whereabouts and fate of our missing in action (MIA) from the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, the brave families of the missing continue to live in uncertainty and anguish regarding their sons, husbands and other family members; and

WHEREAS, still today, more than 73,000 are unaccounted for from World War II, though some 40,000 are deemed unrecoverable, mostly deep sea losses; some 7,500 from the Korean War; over 1,600 still missing in Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War; two from the Persian Gulf War; and two from the Afghanistan/Iraq War, who have not been forgotten; and

WHEREAS, DAV was disappointed with the timing of our government's decision to normalize relations with the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) prior to having achieved the fullest possible accounting of our prisoners of war (POWs) and missing in action from Southeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, DAV believes that the SRV can increase its unilateral efforts to account for Americans still missing in action, especially those who were last known alive in captivity or immediate proximity to capture; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges the United States government to ensure this issue be considered as one of

America's highest priorities by accelerating efforts to obtain the release of any American who may still be held captive and obtain, to the fullest possible extent, an accounting of those still missing and the repatriation of the remains of those who died while serving our nation; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the government of the SRV to increase its unilateral efforts to account for American POW/MIAs, including locating and making available remains of Americans last known alive in captivity that have not previously been returned.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 186
SUPPORT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A COURTHOUSE FOR THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

WHEREAS, veterans and other persons claiming benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs have benefited substantially and materially from the jurisprudence of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (Court); and

WHEREAS, the Court has existed for 35 years; and

WHEREAS, the courtroom, chambers and other space are inadequate to meet the current and future needs of the Court and those it serves; and

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of veterans and their dependents that the Court be accorded the same appurtenances enjoyed by other appellate courts of the United States; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, shall take such actions as may be necessary or advisable in support of legislation to authorize and fund the construction of a suitable and appropriate courthouse for the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 187
OPPOSE ANY AUTHORIZATION OF USE OF MEMBERS
OF THE ARMED FORCES FOR HUMAN EXPERIMENTATION
WITHOUT THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMED CONSENT

WHEREAS, those who serve in our nation's armed forces make personal sacrifices to maintain our national security; and

WHEREAS, members of the armed forces should be accorded respect and the gratitude of the nation; and

WHEREAS, their willingness to sacrifice and relinquish their liberty while serving does not surrender their natural right to determine what shall be done with their own bodies and their right to personal dignity; and

WHEREAS, it is a violation of the ethical principle of the right of self-determination to use service members for human experimentation without their knowledge and informed consent; and

WHEREAS, our government has in the past used military members as "guinea pigs" to test the effects of harmful and injurious substances on the human body; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, opposes any rule or provision that would authorize human experimentation on service members without their knowledge and informed consent.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 205
ENSURE LANDLORDS PARTICIPATING IN THE HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT VETERANS AFFAIRS SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM
CANNOT CHARGE VETERANS MORE THAN THE AMOUNT SPECIFIED
IN THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER AGREEMENT

WHEREAS, eligibility for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers depends on a veteran's meeting the initial income eligibility for veterans at 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) ; and

WHEREAS, HUD-VASH program provides rental assistance and supportive services to help veterans find and maintain permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of HUD-VASH is to provide rental assistance to homeless veterans through HUDS Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, paired with case management and clinical services from the VA; and

WHEREAS, landlords participating in the HUD-VASH program cannot charge veterans more than the amount specified in the HCV agreement and the rent charged by the landlord must be reasonable and within the limits set by the local Public Housing Agency based on Fair Market Rent standards; and

WHEREAS, our nation's veterans should be given every opportunity to succeed; and

WHEREAS, by way of charging the veteran full rent or a program fee on top of what the landlord is receiving from HUD-VASH, further financially strains the veteran; and

WHEREAS, landlords cannot impose additional charges beyond what is agreed upon in the lease and covered by the voucher; and

WHEREAS, success in the HUD-VASH program would be for the veteran to become financially independent after being counselled, and assisted with attaining the benefits they earned by service; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports to ensure Landlords participating in the HUD-VASH program cannot charge veterans more than the amount specified in the HCV agreement and. support any penalties if landlords charge the veteran any money out of pocket, over what is directed by HUD-VASH program.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 215
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO WAIVE FEES FOR FIREARMS
IDENTIFICATION CARDS AND LICENSES TO CARRY
FIREARMS FOR SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, our nation's military personnel have served our country in many different ways but all have one thing in common, that they have chosen to put everything on the line, up to and including their lives, to protect our nation; and

WHEREAS, although there may be many ways of saying thank you, approving a waiver of all fees to obtain a license to carry a firearm will have little effect, other than to show the veteran that he or she is valued and appreciated; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, that the cost for a Firearms Identification Card and all other associated licenses, be waived for all honorably discharged service-disabled veterans.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 216
ESTABLISH A NO-COST NATIONAL MILITARY/VETERANS FISHING LICENSE

WHEREAS, it has been shown that fishing is a relaxing activity that is enjoyed by a large percentage of the veteran population; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation is also used to help veterans and military personnel with mental health issues such as, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder; and

WHEREAS, military life is, by its very nature, nomadic, which leads to veterans and military personnel having roots in multiple states; and

WHEREAS, many veterans and military personnel have "Battle Buddies" with whom they keep in close touch, and on whom they rely to assist with their mental health; and

WHEREAS, fighting veteran military suicide is such a high priority for America;

WHEREAS, providing a no-cost veterans fishing license would be a relatively easy way to help veterans and military personnel find a little peace of mind, no matter where they travel or live; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports a no-cost national veterans fishing license to ease the cost to veterans and help the mental health of both veterans and military personnel.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 232
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO GUARANTEE UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP TO
HONORABLY DISCHARGED SERVICE-DISABLED NONCITIZEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, noncitizen service members have played an important role in the United States military since the Revolutionary War, and thousands continue to serve honorably today; and

WHEREAS, persons with noncitizen status who are permanent residents of the United States have permission to work in the United States, and those who have obtained a high school diploma and speak English are eligible to enlist in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, current law allows noncitizen veterans to apply for expedited citizenship if they meet age and length of service requirements and demonstrate English proficiency and knowledge of the history and government of the United States—however, meeting these criteria does not guarantee citizenship will be awarded; and

WHEREAS, honorably discharged veterans with disabilities due to military service, service-related disabilities pending awards of service connection, or disabilities incurred during or as a result of military service but not awarded service connection should be guaranteed citizenship for their honorable service; and

WHEREAS, these veterans should have the opportunity to live without fear of deportation from the country they fought for; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to provide honorably discharged veterans with disabilities as a result of their military service, regardless if service connection has been established for such conditions, guaranteed citizenship.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 239
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REGULATE THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

WHEREAS, Executive Order 13960 established principles for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) while fostering public trust and building confidence; and

WHEREAS, data and data models that are often either created by or influenced by humans are used to create AI processes which can introduce bias; and

WHEREAS, studies show that AI processes themselves can create and or introduce their own types of bias; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has, through its published AI Vision and AI Strategy, suggested it will be in the middle of the pack, or by virtue of its size, ahead of the pack in its adoption and use of AI; and

WHEREAS, a veteran's claim decision could be delayed or otherwise altered as a result of incorrect or misleading information; and

WHEREAS, the shifting of even repetitive processes and tasks should be providing better outcomes for veterans and enabling the VA to redirect human capital resources to other critical functions; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to ensure the automated tools used to make a claim decision do not create any delays in the processing of claims; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to provide unparalleled transparency in its use of AI with veterans' claims; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV urges the VA to provide semiannual updates to stakeholders on tasks and functions transferred to AI, the outcomes of those tasks and functions, and the work that the human capital, now removed from these tasks, was diverted to accomplish.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 388
EXPAND THE TRAVEL AREA THAT SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS HAVING
A PERMANENT DISABILITY RATED 100% MAY TRAVEL FROM CONTINENTAL
UNITED STATES TO CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES AND OVERSEAS

WHEREAS, the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act allows totally disabled service-connected veterans to travel space-available aboard military aircraft; and

WHEREAS, the military has interpreted the language in the act to authorize disabled veterans to travel in the continental United States (CONUS); or directly between the CONUS and Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa (Guam and American Samoa travelers may transit Hawaii or Alaska); or traveling within Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands on flights operated by the Air Mobility Command; and

WHEREAS, totally disabled service-connected veterans have sacrificed greatly in terms of their impairments and loss of earning capacity; and

WHEREAS, more than any other living group of Americans, such veterans should be eligible for all benefits and privileges that Congress may provide; and

WHEREAS, such totally disabled veterans should be extended the same privileges as other personnel currently authorized to utilize space-available military air travel; and

WHEREAS, the extension of such travel to totally disabled service-connected veterans would not place any additional burden upon the administration of this program; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, seeks the enactment of legislation that would extend the travel area for space-available travel that service-connected veterans having a permanent disability rated 100% to and from CONUS and overseas.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 389
EXTEND SPACE-AVAILABLE AIR TRAVEL TO CAREGIVERS
AND DEPENDENTS OF ELIGIBLE VETERANS

WHEREAS, the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act allows totally disabled service-connected veterans to travel space available on military aircraft; and

WHEREAS, this benefit does not include a veteran's caregiver or dependent; and

WHEREAS, active military and retirees are authorized to travel via space-available travel with their dependents; and

WHEREAS, veterans that are eligible are severely disabled and often need the aid or assistance of a caregiver or family member to deal with the rigors of travel; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation to authorize air travel for caregivers or dependents traveling with eligible veterans on a space-available basis in order to provide aid or assistance as well as to provide parity with Department of Defense eligibility for military retirees.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 390
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO PROTECT HONORABLY
DISCHARGED NONCITIZEN VETERANS FROM DEPORTATION
WHILE APPLYING FOR CITIZENSHIP

WHEREAS, current law allows documented noncitizens the opportunity to serve in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (INA) allows noncitizen service members to apply for naturalization during peacetime after one year of honorable service and allows noncitizen service members to apply for naturalization during periods of hostility after one day of honorable service; and

WHEREAS, noncitizen recruits often receive incorrect or incomplete information regarding their options to become U.S. citizens through military service, and less than half (43.8%) of noncitizen service members naturalize while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, noncitizen veterans arrested for crimes that may be due to underlying and untreated conditions incurred in military service are subject to immediate deportation; and

WHEREAS, current law does not provide any special protection for wartime service-disabled veterans who may become subject to deportation post-service; and

WHEREAS, wartime service-disabled, noncitizen veterans who get deported effectively lose access to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care services and access to VA benefits; and

WHEREAS, Veteran Treatment Courts allow wartime veterans arrested for service-related, nonviolent, nonfelony crimes to address their service-related mental health or substance abuse issues, which may result in removing charges upon successful completion; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports the enactment of legislation to protect honorably discharged wartime noncitizen veterans with service-related disabilities from deportation without due process and the opportunity to participate in any VA program, including the Veterans Treatment Court; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV supports the enactment of legislation to protect honorably discharged wartime noncitizen veterans with service-related disabilities from deportation while filing and awaiting a decision on their application for U.S. citizenship.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 391
SUPPORT FEDERAL LAWS, REGULATIONS, PROGRAMS AND
POLICIES THAT ENHANCE, AND OPPOSE THOSE THAT DIMINISH, DAV'S
ABILITY TO FULFILL ITS MISSION OF ASSISTING SERVICE-DISABLED
VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES AND SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, DAV was founded by Judge Robert Marx and several hundred other fellow veterans on September 25, 1920, in Cincinnati, Ohio, in order to rally their collective voice in the halls of Congress and help their fellow disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, DAV was chartered by Congress on June 17, 1932, as a nonprofit war veterans organization to advance the interests, and work for the betterment, of all wounded, injured and disabled American veterans; and

WHEREAS, DAV is recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a congressionally chartered veterans service organization for the purpose of preparation, presentation and prosecution of claims for VA benefits; and

WHEREAS, DAV is a tax-exempt veterans organization under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code and is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a charitable war veterans organization eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions; and

WHEREAS, DAV has a national headquarters in Kentucky; a Washington headquarters in Washington, D.C.; and hundreds of service officers working inside VA offices and on military bases across the country to support veterans and their families seeking benefits and services earned through their service; and

WHEREAS, DAV has 52 departments, over 1,200 chapters and approximately 1 million members who provide their time, talents and resources to help fulfill DAV's mission of empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, DAV provides meaningful support free of charge to more than 1 million veterans and family members every year through its service, volunteer, transportation, employment, legislative, communications and charitable programs; and

WHEREAS, changes to federal laws, regulations, programs and policies can enhance or diminish DAV's ability to fulfill its mission as a federally chartered, nonprofit charitable veterans service organization and its members' ability to support that mission; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports federal laws, regulations, programs and policies that enhance, and will oppose those that diminish, DAV's ability as a nonprofit veterans organization to assist ill and injured veterans, their families and survivors.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 444
EXTEND MILITARY COMMISSARY AND EXCHANGE PRIVILEGES
AND SPACE-AVAILABLE AIR TRAVEL TO CERTAIN
SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, disabled active-duty personnel who were discharged from military service prior to October 1, 1949—the effective date of the Career Compensation Act—are not entitled to disability retirement from the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, many service-connected disabled veterans have been deprived of the various benefits that all other disabled retired military personnel have enjoyed; and

WHEREAS, due to inflation, service-connected disabled veterans receiving Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation as a sole source of income are experiencing difficulties in keeping pace with the increased cost of living; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation that would extend military commissary and exchange privileges, as well as space-available air travel aboard military aircraft, to enlisted personnel who were discharged from active military service prior to October 1, 1949, for a service-incurred injury or disease rated by the VA as 30% or more disabling and who retained at least a 30% evaluation for a period of five years from the date of separation from active duty.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 499
SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE PRISONER-OF-WAR/MISSING-IN-ACTION
ACCOUNTING COMMAND

WHEREAS, members of DAV have long been deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for United States personnel still captive, missing and otherwise unaccounted for from all of our nation's wars; and

WHEREAS, personnel and funding for the Defense Prisoner-of-War/Missing-in-Action (POW/ MIA) Accounting Agency (DPAA) have not been increased at a level commensurate with the expanded requirement to obtain answers on Americans unaccounted-for from all of our country's wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the United States government to account as fully as possible for America's missing veterans, including—if confirmed deceased—the recovery and identification of their remains when possible; and

WHEREAS, DAV deeply appreciates Vietnam's 2009 proposal to expand the pace and scope of POW/MIA accounting cooperation, including use of United States Navy vessels for underwater operations; and

WHEREAS, DAV recognizes the contributions to successful investigative efforts made by the Defense Intelligence Agency's Stony Beach Team of specialists; and

WHEREAS, this accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, remains steadfast in its commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all United States military and designated civilian personnel missing from our nation's wars; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls upon our government to support personnel increases and full funding for the efforts of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, including specific authorization to augment assigned personnel when additional assets and resources are necessary.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 582
SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF
TRANSPORTATION TO ANNUALLY REPORT ON AVIATION CONSUMER
COMPLAINTS RELATED TO PASSENGERS WITH DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, each year, over 27 million passengers with disabilities travel by air, including many veterans with mobility, cognitive, hearing, vision or other impairments; and

WHEREAS, with an ever-aging population in the United States, including veterans, travelers with disabilities will be a growing customer segment for airlines; and

WHEREAS, without effective accommodations, such as communication of essential flight information, accessible seats and lavatories, appropriate boarding assistance, and careful handling and stowage of wheelchairs and other assistive devices, passengers with disabilities may face challenges when flying on a commercial airline; and

WHEREAS, passengers traveling by air with an authorized service animal have experienced higher than normal issues with boarding, deboarding and seating; and

WHEREAS, passengers have experienced difficulties in being moved, handled or having their schedules changed without consent; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation continues to receive numerous disability-related complaints such as mishandled wheelchairs and scooters; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, supports legislation requiring the Secretary of Transportation on Aviation Consumer Complaints to submit an annual report on aviation consumer complaints related to passengers and veterans with a disability filed with the Department of Transportation to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 598
APPRECIATION TO ALL WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
SUCCESS OF THE 2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION

WHEREAS, the success of the 2024 DAV National Convention convened in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, depends on the total cooperation, collaboration and unselfish devotion of the state, county, and local officials; and

WHEREAS, the success of this National Convention is also attributed to the Department and local Chapters and Units of the DAV and DAVA, particularly to Convention Chairman, Mr. Ronald Cox; and

WHEREAS, we wish to commend all the news media for their encouragement and assistance at all of our Convention activities; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, expresses its sincere appreciation to all groups and/or agencies whose dedication to our principles has made our Convention a successful one; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we wish to extend to the citizens of Phoenix, Arizona, our deepest gratitude for their personal interest in our great organization; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we wish to extend our appreciation to all of the distinguished guests who participated in our convention and support the ideals and principles of our great organization; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we extend our gratitude to Convention Chairman Mr. Ronald Cox, and his entire Committee for providing personalized assistance to our friends and delegates during our Convention stay.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 599
APPRECIATION TO THE PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER
FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE 2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION

WHEREAS, the excellent service and ambience of the Phoenix Convention Center contributed greatly to the success of the 2024 National Convention of the DAV convened in Phoenix, Arizona; and

WHEREAS, the courteous team members of the Convention Center staff ensured the comfort and satisfaction of the DAV officers, delegates and guests; and

WHEREAS, the classic setting, friendly environment, and numerous amenities helped make the 2024 National Convention a truly memorable experience; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, expresses its deepest appreciation for the Phoenix Convention Center and to its entire staff for their friendly, personalized attention, which helped make the 2024 National Convention a resounding success.

* * *

RESOLUTION NO. 600
EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO NATIONAL COMMANDER NANCY G. ESPINOSA

WHEREAS, DAV National Commander Nancy G. Espinosa, of Kaysville, Utah, served honorably in the United States Army Reserve, Army and New Mexico National Guard, from 1975 to 1990; and

WHEREAS, she comes from a long line of warriors, including her father, World War II veteran Joe Espinosa, and her Native American ancestors; and

WHEREAS, at the insistence of her mother, Eleanor Espinosa, she answered a help-wanted ad and enlisted in the Army Reserve at 17 years old; and

WHEREAS, she served with the 650th Personnel Services Company, Army Reserve, as a personnel records specialist from 1975 to 1985; and

WHEREAS, she was called to active-duty Army and was assigned to the 96th Army Reserve Command as a finance and budget noncommissioned officer; and

WHEREAS, after four years in the Army, she transitioned to the New Mexico National Guard and continued her service as a finance specialist; and

WHEREAS, after experiencing immense personal loss and health complications, she separated from the guard and pursued a career in the federal government; and

WHEREAS, immediately upon separating in 1990, she became a lifetime DAV member, joining other members of her family; and

WHEREAS, she has served Davis County Chapter 14 in Layton, Utah, as a treasurer, chapter service officer, adjutant, 1st junior vice commander and Benefits Protection Team leader; and

WHEREAS, she has held several leadership positions at the department and national levels, including commander for the DAV Department of Utah; director of the DAV Charitable Service Trust; and member of the POW/MIA Committee; and

WHEREAS, the membership of DAV unanimously elected her to lead the more than 1 million-member organization as its national commander during the 2023 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Commander Espinosa has shown outstanding leadership during her year as national commander, advancing DAV's mission and promoting DAV's message before Congress, at veterans events and public gatherings and through national media; and

WHEREAS, as the second woman and first Hispanic woman elected to lead DAV, Commander Espinosa made it a key priority to ensure that the unique needs and contributions of women veterans, who have been historically underserved and unrecognized, were represented across the organization and on Capitol Hill; and

WHEREAS, Commander Espinosa has advocated on behalf of veterans to ensure the VA can provide timely, high-quality and equitable services so that all veterans receive the health care and benefits they have earned, as well as the proper recognition of the service and sacrifices made by their family members, caregivers and survivors; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV, in its National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, expresses its members' heartfelt appreciation and profound gratitude to Commander Espinosa for her sacrifices, selfless service, professionalism and dedication to her fellow wounded, ill and injured veterans; their families; their survivors; and DAV during her year as DAV national commander; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV also salutes and extends sincere appreciation to Commander Espinosa's family, including her sons, Eric, an Air Force veteran, and Ian, a Navy veteran, for their steadfast support during her term as DAV national commander.

* * *

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: You have heard the motion. May I have a second?

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PARSETICH: Mic 4.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 4.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PARSETICH: Joe Parsetich, Chapter 2, from the great State of Montana, would second that motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: In accordance with Rule 9, now is the time for any rejected resolutions to be read. Are there any rejected resolutions you wish read? Hearing none, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Committee on General Resolutions and Membership chair withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Our next speaker needs no introduction. He is hardly a new face to the vast majority of us here, but he's taking on a new, important role. And we're honored to welcome him to you all as president of the DAV Charitable Service Trust.

Marc Burgess, a Gulf War veteran of the United States Navy (Bugle plays), was appointed national adjutant of DAV in 2013 and held that post through June of last year.

From serving as a crew member and plank owner aboard the U.S.S. Normandy through his storied career that began as a service officer apprentice, he's a proven leader who has dedicated his life to ensuring promises are kept to America's heroes.

Please welcome him to the stage. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Mr. Burgess advanced to the podium.)

MR. LEWIS: Past National Adjutant Marc Burgess began his DAV service in 1995. After proving himself in numerous capacities and rising to the top of DAV's appointed ranks, his tenure as national adjutant proved to be transformative.

As the Trust president, he oversees the efforts to ensure support is available to programs that serve the unmet needs of our nation's veterans, their families and survivors.

CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS: Thank you, Commander, for your very kind introduction. And thank you to my fellow veterans for this opportunity to speak with you about our Charitable Service Trust.

As president let me introduce the Trust's governing board. They are Vice-President Barry Jesinoski, Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Nixon, and our Directors: National Commander Nancy Espinosa, Denise Williams, Danny Oliver, and Kim Hubers.

When the Trust was established by DAV in 1986, it was in response to massive government spending cuts that threatened the care and services veterans and their families needed. Our brothers-and sisters-in-arms deserve better than to be dependent on the fleeting and ever-changing priorities of Congress. (Applause)

Since then, our donors – which many of you in this audience are – have joined us in the effort to fill the gap created by the ever-changing priorities and policies of lawmakers.

This was an historic year for the Trust. Our total grant distribution for the year was \$21.5 million. Thanks to each of you and every person here who gave. (Applause)

It's an incredible amount of money that has gone to so many deserving organizations. We get to hear, as you will in a few moments, just how impactful those funds are to helping so many veterans and the families that need it.

It's those stories about the life-changing services that allow us to keep doing what we do. But it's also because people know the administrator and board are good stewards of the Trust's financial resources.

More than 95 cents of every donated dollar directly supports programs that contribute to the victories the Trust makes possible.

We consistently earn the four-star charity rating from Charity Navigator, which is the nation's largest independent charity evaluator. We're also listed as one of their "Most followed Charities." And we've earned the "Accountability and Finance", "Culture and Community", and "Leadership and Adaptability" beacons under their Encompass Rating System.

The Trust also received Candid's Platinum Seal of Transparency for 2023.

These recognitions, and the overall success of the program, wouldn't be possible without the diligent efforts of Bridgette Sorrell and her team that administers the Trust. Thank you, Bridgette, and your team, for all your hard work. (Applause)

Corporate matching gift programs, bequests and other forms of contributions from corporations, foundations, and individual donors enable the Trust to fulfill its mission.

In 2023, these gifts, along with income derived from investments, totaled just over \$19.7 million. Although our total expenses exceeded our revenue by \$2.1 million this past year, the Trust continues to remain in a healthy position to provide grants devoted to veterans' critical health care, education, employment, transition assistance, creative healing, legal services, and therapeutic activities addressing both physical and psychological barriers.

We are proud to support the work so many organizations do for veterans and their families. They each reflect our mission of empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity.

One of those organizations is Joseph House in Cincinnati, Ohio. They serve veterans and their families suffering or affected by addiction through treatment and recovery programs designed to promote healthy, sustainable lifestyles and reintegration into the community.

Let's take a look.

(Whereupon, a video on Joseph's House was viewed, followed by a round of applause.)

CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL ADJUTANT BURGESS: To share more about their programs and mission, please join me in welcoming the Joseph House Executive Director Alicia Harter-Patterson. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Harter-Patterson joined Charitable Service Trust President and Past National Adjutant Burgess at the podium.)

MS. ALICIA HARTER-PATTERSON: Good morning, everyone.

(Response of "Good morning.")

MS. HARTER-PATTERSON: Thank you for that introduction. I am genuinely grateful to have this moment with all of you. And today I'm here to express my heartfelt thanks for the incredible support that the Joseph House has been fortunate enough to receive.

First and foremost, I want to recognize each one of you here. To the veterans, thank you for your service. And to the family members and loved ones, thank you for your sacrifice, as well. Your support has been a cornerstone in our journey.

I would like to personally extend a special thanks to the DAV for your support, your guidance, and your encouragement.

My name is Alicia Patterson. I am the executive director of the Joseph House. I am a licensed therapist. And I am a United States Marine Corps veteran. Semper Fi. (Cheers) I knew that would get some of you guys.

I served with Lima Company 325 in Columbus, Ohio, for nearly a decade. I was an administrator in an infantry unit. And in 2005 my unit was called up for deployment to Iraq.

While I was not able to be attached at that time, my fellow Marines would be leaving for what they would not know would be a very tumultuous deployment. And many of them would never return home. Those that did return faced significant challenges.

I recognize that many veterans were struggling with substance abuse disorders, mental health issues, suicidal ideations, and challenges with reintegrating back into our communities. This led me to begin my path in working directly with veterans, but in a therapeutic capacity.

Joseph House was established in 1993. And upon entering the Joseph House in 2016 as a licensed therapist, I recognized that the physical site had many needs.

Joseph House was unable to provide service or treatment to veterans with severe mobility issues. And due to the physical structure of the building we were unable to safely serve female veterans. And none of this held true to our mission of leaving no veteran behind. This ultimately launched the idea that a new site would more adequately serve all veterans who were willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice.

Joseph House is a veteran-exclusive facility. And our clients bond by having gone through similar types of experiences and struggles. This builds camaraderie and solidarity, and it is a tremendous benefit for our clients to conquer their struggles alongside other service members.

The DAV's contribution enabled us to advance our vision and give our capital campaign the foundation upon which to build. And your generosity was the go-ahead we needed to pursue this dream. We truly cannot thank you enough for your generous gift to our building fund campaign.

And your support will allow us to continue providing services and resources to the people in our community who need that most. And before I finish up here I asked a few of the veterans – we just moved in June 10th of 2024. So it's a few days shy of two months and I asked some of the veterans what does this new facility mean to them and so I brought some of those with me just to share.

1. One of our veterans said, "The Joseph House and the new facility bring me hope." It brings them hope.

2. "This new home allows for me to heal." And,

3. The one that really stuck with me, he says to me, "We are not forgotten and this shows."

(Applause) Yes.

People like you, you truly make a difference in this world. And we are incredibly grateful. Thank you, again, for your unwavering support. It means more to me than words can ever express. And veterans' lives are forever changed because of you. Thank you so much. (Applause) We appreciate you. Thank you.

(Whereupon, Ms. Harter-Patterson withdrew from the stage and Charitable Service Trust President and Past National Adjutant Burgess returned to the podium.)

CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL ADJUTANT BURGESS:

Thank you, Alicia. We are grateful for the work Joseph House does to make the lives of veterans better. Let's give another round of applause. (Applause)

Help getting free from the bonds of addiction is just one reason the Trust partners with organizations like Joseph House. Recovery, healing and thriving may look different to each of us, and that's why we exist.

We want to help the very best organizations in the country that are working toward a common goal of helping veterans and their families.

Organizations like Save A Warrior that provide a path to confronting and healing from the effects of complex post-traumatic stress. In 2023, nearly 400 veterans went through their intensive three-day cohorts and are continuing through the 500-day follow-on plan.

And Feeding Pets of the Homeless which provided basic veterinary care and support to 262 animals of homeless veterans in 2023.

And the D.C.-based Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program that successfully argued 28 cases of veterans seeking upgrades to their discharges from their service during 2023.

The veterans served by these and the many other organizations supported by the Trust represent lives changed, saved, and enhanced because of the generosity of loyal supporters, corporations, and foundations.

Thank you for your continued support of the Trust and our mission. To learn more about DAV's Charitable Service Trust and keep up-to-date with our initiatives at Charitable Service Trust dot org or by liking us on Facebook.

Thank you for allowing me to make this presentation.

Now, I do want to close with something and that is that you may be asking, "Why is Marc Burgess up here instead of Dick Marbes?" Well, after 27 years as a dedicated servant on the CST board, Past CST President Dick Marbes decided to take a well-deserved rest and enjoy all that his beautiful home State of Wisconsin has to offer, like eating cheese and lake fishing. (Laughter)

It's hard to think of anyone who deserves a little downtime more than Dick. He was named the Wisconsin Disabled Veteran of the Year in 1978. And he hasn't slowed down one bit since then.

He served on countless committees, coordinated the efforts of volunteers, and has dedicated an unbelievable amount of time after his injury to bettering the lives of his fellow veterans.

The service-connected disabled veteran, who lost his leg while serving in the Air Force, has been a devoted leader who has faithfully served fellow veterans in so many DAV positions at the state and local level. This includes, of course, his election at a very historic time as our national commander in 1983.

His contributions to this organization and to his brothers- and sisters-in-arms is immeasurable. Thank you, Dick, for your inspirational commitment to excellence. We are grateful to have you as part of DAV's family. (Standing Ovation)

Thank you, Commander. That concludes my report.

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Charitable Service Trust

Financial Statements as of and for the
Year Ended December 31, 2022, and
Independent Auditor's Report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Directors of
Disabled American Veterans Charitable Service Trust:

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Charitable Service Trust (the "Trust"), which comprise the statement of financial position as of December 31, 2022, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cashflows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements (collectively referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Trust as of December 31, 2022, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Trust and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern for one year after the date that the financial statements are issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery,

intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Trust's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Deloitte + Touche LLP

April 12, 2023

DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS) CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2022

ASSETS

CASH	\$ 5,856,468
INTEREST AND DIVIDENDS RECEIVABLE	59,925
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	732,669
CAMPAIGNS' PLEDGES RECEIVABLE—Net of allowance for uncollectible pledges of \$181,944	81,260
PREPAID EXPENSES AND OTHER	16,123
INVESTMENTS—Includes charitable gift annuity reserve balance of \$5,896,833	49,945,259
SOFTWARE—Net	<u>28,728</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 56,720,432</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS

LIABILITIES:	
Accounts payable—Disabled American Veterans	\$ 24,717
Accounts payable—other	76,774
Annuity payment liability	<u>3,597,491</u>
Total liabilities	<u>3,698,982</u>
NET ASSETS WITH AND WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	
Without donor restrictions	52,938,841
With donor restrictions	<u>82,609</u>
Total net assets	<u>53,021,450</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 56,720,432</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS) CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE:			
Contributions—net of assessment fees and provision for uncollectible pledges of \$186,509	\$ 11,671,767	\$ 1,336,372	\$ 13,008,139
Contributions of charitable gift annuities	316,973	-	316,973
Bequests	2,557,998	995,907	3,553,905
Net investment return	(6,286,366)	-	(6,286,366)
Net assets released from restrictions	<u>2,268,670</u>	<u>(2,268,670)</u>	<u>-</u>
Total support and revenue	<u>10,529,042</u>	<u>63,609</u>	<u>10,592,651</u>
EXPENSES:			
Program services	9,950,136	-	9,950,136
Management and general	223,236	-	223,236
Fundraising	<u>93,336</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>93,336</u>
Total expenses	<u>10,266,708</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,266,708</u>
CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY VALUATION ADJUSTMENT			
	<u>173,812</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>173,812</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	436,146	63,609	499,755
NET ASSETS—Beginning of year	<u>52,502,695</u>	<u>19,000</u>	<u>52,521,695</u>
NET ASSETS—End of year	<u>\$ 52,938,841</u>	<u>\$ 82,609</u>	<u>\$ 53,021,450</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS) CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST

STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

	Program Services	Management and General	Fundraising	Total
EXPENSES:				
Allocations to charitable programs	\$ 9,838,621	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,838,621
Administrative charges	-	43,332	72,236	115,568
Professional fees	16,075	99,457	-	115,532
Grant proposal processing	64,997	-	-	64,997
Banking fees	-	40,964	-	40,964
Advertising	11,720	781	3,125	15,626
Maintenance	-	13,734	-	13,734
Printing, postage, and supplies	4,144	8,591	11	12,746
Travel	2,356	10,138	-	12,494
Legal fees	-	-	6,841	6,841
Depreciation	10,179	-	-	10,179
Insurance	2,044	2,044	-	4,088
Other expenses	-	4,195	11,124	15,319
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$ 9,950,136</u>	<u>\$ 223,236</u>	<u>\$ 93,336</u>	<u>\$ 10,266,708</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS) CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:	
Change in net assets	\$ 499,755
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:	
Noncash investment contributions	(216,758)
Net change in depreciation of investments	9,371,647
Net gain on sale of investments	(2,054,751)
Depreciation	10,179
Charitable gift annuity valuation adjustment	(173,812)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:	
Interest and dividends receivable	(22,820)
Accounts receivable	(164,251)
Campaigns' pledges receivable	1,999
Prepaid expenses and other	4,164
Accounts payable—DAV and other	(182,429)
Annuity payment liability	<u>(316,973)</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>6,755,950</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:	
Purchases of investments	(26,890,048)
Proceeds from the sale of investments	<u>14,107,184</u>
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(12,782,864)</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:	
Proceeds from gift annuity agreement contributions	704,590
Payments to annuitants	<u>(504,197)</u>
Net cash provided by financing activities	<u>200,393</u>
NET DECREASE IN CASH	(5,826,521)
CASH—Beginning of year	<u>11,682,989</u>
CASH—End of year	<u>\$ 5,856,468</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS) CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

AS OF AND FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

1. ORGANIZATION

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Charitable Service Trust (the "Trust") is a not-for-profit service organization formed under the laws of the District of Columbia for the single purpose of empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. To carry out this responsibility, the Trust supports physical and psychological rehabilitation programs; enhances research and mobility for veterans with amputations and spinal cord injuries; benefits aging veterans; aids and shelters homeless veterans; and evaluates and addresses the needs of veterans wounded in recent wars and conflicts and their caregivers.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Financial Statements—The accompanying financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAP).

New Accounting Standards—In February 2016, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) issued Accounting Standards Update (ASU) No. 2016-02, *Leases (Topic 842)*. This standard amends the existing guidance and requires lessees to recognize on the balance sheet assets and liabilities for the rights and obligations created by those leases with lease terms longer than 12 months. This update is effective for annual financial statements issued for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2021, and is to be applied using a modified retrospective approach; early adoption is permitted. The adoption of ASU No. 2016-02 did not have a significant impact on the financial statements or the financial statement disclosures.

In September 2020, the FASB issued ASU No. 2020-07, *Not-for-Profit Entities (Topic 958): Presentation and Disclosures by Not-for-Profit Entities for Contributed Nonfinancial Assets*. The amendments require not-for-profit entities to present contributed nonfinancial assets as a separate line item in the statement of activities, apart from contributions of cash and other financial contributions. The standard also requires additional disclosure related to contributed nonfinancial assets. The amendment, which requires retrospective application, is effective for annual periods beginning after June 15, 2021. The adoption of ASU No. 2016-02 did not have a significant impact on the financial statements or the financial statement disclosures.

In June 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-13, *Financial Instruments—Credit Losses*, which is included in ASC Topic 326, *Measurement of Credit Losses on Financial Instruments*. The new standard requires a financial asset (or group of financial assets) measured at amortized cost basis to be presented at the net amount expected to be collected. The new standard revises the accounting requirements related to the measurement of credit losses and will require organizations to measure all expected credit losses for financial assets based on historical experience, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts about collectability. Assets must be presented in the financial statements at the net amount expected to be collected. The expected increases or decreases of expected credit losses that have taken

place during the period, is reflected in the statement of activities. Management is in the process of evaluating the impact on the financial statements.

Cash—The Trust considers all highly liquid instruments purchased with a maturity date of three months or less to be cash equivalents and are stated at cost, which approximates fair value. The earnings credit received on the Trust’s checking accounts was \$200,509 in 2022. The Trust maintains its cash in bank deposit accounts, which, at times, exceed federally insured limits. The Trust has not experienced any losses in such accounts.

Revenue Recognition—The Trust is a member of Independent Charities of America (ICA) and Military Family & Veterans Service Organizations of America (MFVSOA). ICA and MFVSOA are charitable agency federations, certified by the US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to participate in the annual combined federal campaigns, as well as state and corporate workplace giving campaigns.

The Trust recognizes contribution revenue as an increase in net assets without donor restrictions when notification of the campaign designations is received and also recognizes an allowance for uncollectible pledges. Pledge receivables that are outstanding for more than one year are written off in their entirety. The Trust also evaluates pledges receivable for any amounts to be specifically reserved. Pledges receivable of \$81,260 are expected to be received in 2023. Amounts received from accounts previously written off are recognized as contribution revenue when received.

As a member of MFVSOA during 2022, the Trust was assessed a portion of MFVSOA’s annual operating budget based on the relative amount of total pledges made to the Trust compared with the sum of all member agency pledges. Pledges designated to MFVSOA (versus a member agency) and other revenue, such as interest income, are shared among all member agencies in this same proportion. Therefore, if MFVSOA’s revenue exceeds expenses, the member agencies share the excess income. This excess income is distributed in the following year. The Trust recognizes such distribution as an increase in net assets without donor restrictions when received. The Trust received \$18,324 in 2022, included in contributions within the statement of activities, for excess income recognized by MFVSOA in 2021.

Investments—Investments include investment of contributions and charitable gift annuity agreements (see Note 7). Investments are recorded at fair value, and realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected within the net investment return, in the statement of activities. The fair value of the Trust’s investments is determined based on the quoted market prices of the related securities or quoted prices in active markets for instruments that are similar, or model-derived valuations, in which all significant inputs and significant value drivers are observable in active markets. Gains and losses on the sale of investment securities are recognized based upon the specific identification method and are reflected in net investment return. The Trust’s policy is to report its cash and cash equivalents, which include money market funds, within its trust accounts as investments.

Contributions and Bequests—The Trust recognizes contributions when cash, securities or other assets; an unconditional promise to give; or a notification of a beneficial interest is received. Conditional promises to give—that is, those with a measurable performance or other barrier and a right of return—are not recognized until the conditions on which they depend have been met.

Contributions and bequests received are recorded as support with and without donor restrictions depending on the existence and nature of any donor restrictions. The Trust received stock contributions at a fair market value of \$216,758, included in contributions within the statement of activities, in 2022.

Contributed Nonfinancial Assets—For the year ended December 31, 2022, no contributed nonfinancial assets were received. Should nonfinancial assets be received, they would be separately recognized within the statement of activities and disclosed within the notes to the financial statements.

Allocation of Expenses—The financial statements report certain categories of expenses that are attributable to one or more program or supporting services of the Trust. Those expenses include grant proposal processing, administrative charges, professional fees, travel, printing, postage and supplies, insurance, advertising and other expenses. All expenses are allocated based on estimates of time and effort toward each program or supporting service. Allocation estimates are reviewed annually based on the specific expense and adjusted accordingly.

Income Taxes—As a not-for-profit service organization, the Trust has received a determination from the Internal Revenue Service that it is exempt from federal income tax as a 501(c) (3) organization. Contributions made to the Trust are tax deductible by the contributor as provided in Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Use of Estimates—The preparation of the financial statements in accordance with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements, and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

3. NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DONOR RESTRICTION

Net assets are released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes specified by donors. The net assets released from restrictions in 2022 are as follows:

Purpose restrictions accomplished:	
To Disabled American Veterans	\$ 2,013,976
To DAV Departments and Chapters	15,432
To National Service Foundation	95,527
Program services	<u>143,735</u>
Net assets released from donor restrictions	<u>\$ 2,268,670</u>

4. LIQUIDITY AND AVAILABILITY OF FINANCIAL ASSETS

The Trust's working capital and cash flows are attributable to the contributions, net of assessment fees and uncollectible pledges, received throughout the year. As of December 31, 2022, the Trust's financial assets (total assets, less prepaid expenses and software) totaled \$56,675,581. All financial assets with the exception of the Charitable Gift Annuity Reserve investment of \$5,896,833 as of December 31, 2022, are available to fund expenditures within one year following the Statement of Financial Position date.

The Trust has a policy to structure its financial assets to be available as its fundraising costs and general and administrative expenses come due. In addition, the Trust awards grants to board-approved applicants. As part of its liquidity management, the Trust invests cash in excess of daily requirements in various short-term investments. The short-term investments are invested for capital preservation and liquidity for cash flow requirements, such as money market funds, certificates of deposit, and commercial paper.

The Trust's long-term investment portfolio is for the deposit of proceeds and payment of obligations from charitable gift annuities. The portfolio is invested in marketable fixed-income and equity securities, index and actively managed mutual funds, and exchange traded funds. A portion of the balance is invested as required in accordance with governing regulatory agencies to pay the long-term charitable gift annuity beneficiary obligations. See Note 7 for further information. The remaining is invested with the intent of providing capital appreciation and total return to cover future expenditures and grants awarded.

5. FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENTS

Accounting Standards Codification 820, *Fair Value Measurements and Disclosures*, provides a framework for measuring fair value. This framework provides a fair value hierarchy that prioritizes the inputs to valuation techniques used to measure fair value, as follows: Level 1, which refers to securities valued using unadjusted quoted prices from active markets for identical assets; Level 2, which refers to securities not traded on an active market, but for which observable market inputs are readily available; and Level 3, which refers to securities valued based on significant unobservable inputs. Assets are classified in their entirety based on the lowest level of input that is significant to the fair value measurement.

The Trust did not hold any financial assets requiring the use of inputs that are unobservable and significant to the overall fair value measurement (Level 3) during 2022.

Asset Valuation Techniques—Valuation techniques used maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs. The following is a description of the valuation methodologies used for assets recorded at fair value. There have been no changes in the methodologies used at December 31, 2022.

Cash equivalents, composed of money market funds, are categorized as Level 1, and are valued at cost, which approximates fair value. The money market funds represent the Trust's shares in a registered investment company's fund.

US government securities (US Treasury notes), common stocks, and exchange-traded funds (ETFs), categorized as Level 1, are valued at the closing price reported in the active market in which the individual security is traded.

Certificates of deposit and commercial paper categorized as Level 2 are valued at fair value, which approximates amortized cost.

US government agency notes and municipal and corporate bonds, categorized as Level 2, are valued using third-party pricing services. These services may use, for example, model-based pricing methods that utilize observable market data as inputs. Broker-dealer bids or quotes of securities with similar characteristics may also be used.

Shares of registered investment companies (mutual funds), categorized as Level 1, are valued at quoted market prices that represent the net asset value of shares held at year-end.

The major categories of the Trust's financial assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis as of December 31, 2022, are as follows:

Asset Category	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Total
Cash equivalents	\$ 16,491,852	\$ -	\$ 16,491,852
US government securities	1,274,230	-	1,274,230
Common stocks	1,177,202	-	1,177,202
Certificates of deposit	-	593,926	593,926
US government agency notes	-	648,049	648,049
Municipal bonds	-	163,663	163,663
Corporate bonds	-	4,290,126	4,290,126
Mutual funds/ETFs:	-	-	-
Domestic equity funds/ETFs	18,449,708	-	18,449,708
Domestic fixed income funds	171,720	-	171,720
International fixed income funds	936,955	-	936,955
International equity funds	<u>5,747,828</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,747,828</u>
Total mutual funds/ETFs	<u>25,306,211</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>25,306,211</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 44,249,495</u>	<u>\$ 5,695,764</u>	<u>\$ 49,945,259</u>

Fair value of the annuity payment liability of \$3,597,491, classified as Level 2 within the fair value hierarchy, as of December 31, 2022, was calculated as the net present value of expected annuity payments based on the following significant assumptions:

- (1) The discount rate expected to reflect yields available on high-quality investments; and
- (2) The mortality assumption based on expected annuitant longevity.

6. RELATED-PARTY TRANSACTIONS

During 2022, DAV personnel assisted the Trust on a limited basis in administering its business operations, fundraising, and grant programs. For these personnel services, the Trust reimbursed DAV \$180,565 in 2022. As of December 31, 2022, the Trust owed DAV \$24,717. DAV provides the Trust with the use of facilities, equipment, and occasional magazine space at no charge.

In 2022, the Trust distributed the following in support of DAV programs and services:

Assistance to disabled veterans and their families	\$ 1,696,798
DAV Employment Initiative	1,600,000
DAV "Just B Kids" Scholarship	310,000
Transportation Network	200,000
Veterans retreats	150,000
DAV Capital Campaign	83,333
Jesse Brown Youth Scholarship Program	45,000
DAV Disaster Relief	23,500
DAV National Convention	15,000
National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic	7,500
DAV 5K Program	5,000

In performing the duties of their positions, DAV's National Commander and National Adjutant serve on the Board of Directors of the Trust. In performing the duties of their positions as a Trust Director, some members also serve on the DAV National Service Foundation Board of Directors and the Disabled Veterans' Life Memorial Foundation's Board of Directors.

In 2022, the Trust made contributions of \$331,156, to the DAV National Service Foundation's Columbia Trust for the DAV Transportation Network Van Grant Program. In 2022, the Trust also made contributions of \$95,526 to the DAV National Service Foundation to be used in assisting disabled veterans and their dependents.

7. ANNUITY PAYMENT LIABILITY

The Trust enters into charitable gift annuity agreements with donors. In the statement of activities, contributions of charitable gift annuities of \$316,973 for the year ended December 31, 2022, are the result of the portion of gift annuity contributions that exceed the annuity payment liability estimated at the date of the contribution.

The Trust recognizes an annuity payment liability as the present value of the future cash flows expected to be paid to the donors and their beneficiaries using a discount rate of 5% as of December 31, 2022.

In 2022, the Trust used the mortality table IAR-2012 in determining the liability to reflect the most up-to-date expectations with regard to longevity for individual annuitant lives.

In 2022, the Charitable Gift Annuity Valuation Adjustment of \$173,812 consists of:

- Gain from deceased annuitants of \$445,177, and
- Other actuarial adjustments of \$(271,365), which are primarily related to discounting of the liability during the year ended December 31, 2022.

There are various state statutes and regulations that govern not-for-profit entities that enter into charitable gift annuity agreements with donors. As required by various state statutes and regulations, the Trust segregates the deposit of charitable gift annuity proceeds and reserves a portion for fulfillment of future annuity obligations. The required minimum balance of the reserve account is maintained and invested in accordance with applicable state statutes, the fair market value of which is \$4,907,383 as of December 31, 2022.

In addition to this reserve account, the Trust is required by California statutes to maintain segregated reserves for future obligations to charitable gift annuity donors residing in California. The fair market value for the California reserve account is \$989,450 as of December 31, 2022. The minimum required balance of the segregated accounts for California donors is calculated and invested in accordance with applicable California statutes and regulations.

The Trust also maintains the minimum amount of net assets without donor restrictions as required by any state for the acceptance of charitable gift annuities, which is \$1,000,000. The total net assets without donor restrictions that are subject to state statutes or regulations (calculated as the reserve funds (investments), less the annuity payment liability) amounted to \$2,299,342 as of December 31, 2022.

8. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

No other events have occurred after December 31, 2022, but before April 12, 2023, the date the financial statements were available to be issued, that require consideration as adjustments to, or disclosures in, the financial statements.

* * * * *

(Whereupon, Charitable Service Trust President and Past National Adjutant Burgess withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Marc. May I have a motion to accept that impressive report?

MR. BOB HINES: Bob Hines from Minnesota accepts that report.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: May I have a second?

MR. HANK MYERS: Mic 2.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 2.

MR. MYERS: Hank Myers out of Wyoming Chapter Number 2, we second the motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered.

(Whereupon Charitable Service Trust President and Past National Adjutant Burgess withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Nearly a decade ago this year, a long-overdue memorial paying tribute to the sacrifices of the millions of Americans who have become disabled as a result of their military service was opened in Washington, D.C.

While DAV played a pivotal role in the creation of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, which was dedicated October 5th, 2014, we have continued to serve as stewards of this important monument ever since.

I'm honored to welcome onto the stage a well-known and respected DAV leader who was there in 2014 when the monument was dedicated. He helped lead the charge to establish this memorial and has been a tireless advocate for its use, preservation, and promotion ever since.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to the stage the Disabled Veterans Life Memorial Foundation President Dennis Joyner. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and DVLMF President and Past National Commander Joyner advanced to the podium.)

MR. LEWIS: DAV Past National Commander Dennis Joyner, was appointed board president for the Disabled Veterans' Life Memorial Foundation in 2015.

A combat-disabled amputee of the Vietnam War, he was named the Handicapped American of the Year in 1983 by then President Ronald Reagan.

DVLMF PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER DENNIS JOYNER: Thank you, Commander Espinosa, for your kind introduction. Adjutant Jesinoski, national officers, delegates and guests.

I am honored to be before you to provide this update on the Memorial. It's hard to believe that in just a couple of months we will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of this dedication.

We've sent save-the-date invitations to department leaders for this special event and we look forward to seeing how much space is left after we receive these initial RSVPs. Stand by for more exciting news.

I would like to take a moment and introduce the Disabled Veterans' Life Memorial Board of Directors: Vice-President Barry Jesinoski; Secretary-Treasurer Dave Gorman; and our directors: National Commander Nancy Espinosa, Dave Riley, Don Samuels, and Nachee Miller; and our Ex-Officio Member Art Wilson.

They continue to do a wonderful job of ensuring the upkeep of the Memorial and promoting its message. Thank you to each of them. (Applause)

It was no small undertaking to bring to life the vision of a place to memorialize the sacrifices disabled American veterans have made for their country. Over the course of 17 years, visionaries like Lois Pope, Jesse Brown, and Art Wilson led the efforts to make it happen.

The result of their work is a Memorial on a 2.4 acre plot of land within sight of the Congressional offices in Washington, D.C. It features a star-shaped fountain with a solitary flame at its center. Granite slabs and glass panels all tell the story of veterans forever changed by their visible and invisible wound of war.

If you haven't been there yet, I promise you, it's a moving experience and it's definitely worth the trip. Actually, don't just take my word for it. As with anything these days, just listen to what people on the Internet have to say about it.

Betty says, "Very moving. Beautifully designed. Very artistic. Clean. Quiet. I will revisit again." Five stars.

Greg says, "Somber reminder of those who served who deserve to be remembered for their sacrifices." Five stars.

Anthony says, "Touching memorial dedicated to those who have been disabled through service to their country. Nice place to sit and relax and contemplate the cost of liberty." Five stars, again.

P. Sudino says, "The design of the sculptures with the cutouts and the transparency makes this one of the most moving and emotional memorials in the city." Five stars. Well, five dots. I'm not quite sure what Trip Advisor is doing with their rating system, but. (Laughter)

The reviews go on. But you know, it must be the truth if that many people in Washington, D.C., can agree on something. (Laughter)

But in all – isn't that the truth? But in all seriousness, these reviews reflect the purpose of our foundation's mission: getting the word out so current and future generations will come to fully appreciate everything disabled veterans have done for them.

People are understanding this sacrifice. And that's thanks to all of you who have helped support the Memorial with sharing the word, making donations, and many volunteering to maintain it. Truly, thank you. Please, please, give yourselves a round of applause. (Applause)

As a reminder, for those who aren't able to see the Memorial in person, we have a virtual experience that conveys the message while offering a connection to DAV's veterans' resources and benefits' advocates.

I encourage everyone in this room to continue to promote the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial and what it represents and honors.

We included a brochure about the Memorial in your convention bags. Please take a moment to review the materials and share it with your others back home.

To every member of the board of directors, past and present, and to the entirety of the DAV and Auxiliary, thank you for your unwavering support.

We will continue to work alongside National Park Service staff, volunteers and supporters to improve the memorial and to provide a means for both veterans and their loved ones throughout the country to access its meaningful message.

To take the virtual tour or learn more about the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, please visit AVDLM dot org. You can also follow us on Facebook.

Thank you, Commander. This concludes my report. (Applause)

(Whereupon, DVLMF President and Past National Commander Joyner withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Denny. May I have a motion to accept that report?

MR. OATHER MARTIN: Mic 3.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 3.

MR. MARTIN: Commander Oather Martin from the Department of Minnesota, accept that report.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: May I have a second?

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PARSETICH: Mic 4.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 4.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PARSETICH: Joe Parsetich from the beautiful State of Montana, seconds.

COMMADNER ESPINOSA: All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered. (Applause)

(Whereupon, DVLMF President and Past National Commander Joyner withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Now, will you please welcome Kirk Johnson, president of the Commanders and Adjutants Association.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Mr. Johnson advanced to the podium.)

MR. KIRK JOHNSON: National Commander Espinosa, National Adjutant Jesinoski, national officers, delegates and guests, good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

MR. JOHNSON: I am proud to have been elected as president of the State Commanders and Adjutants Association for the year 2024 and 2025.

We pledge to continue our support for the national organization through our sponsorship of the State Commanders and Adjutants Orientation, the Mid-Winter Conference, the Golf Clinic, and the Winter Sports Clinic. We look forward to another very productive year in the DAV.

I would like to read into the record our officers and committees for the coming year for the State Commanders and Adjutants' Association officers 2024-2025. The president is Kirk Johnson, from the golden State of California. (Applause) Vice-president is Paul Hermon Jr., from Louisiana. (Applause)

Executive committee is Michael Elmore of Missouri; (Applause) Lisa Gregory of Virginia; (Applause) Betty Minus of Maryland; (Applause) Debora Olson of Massachusetts; (Applause) Hugo Perez of Alabama; (Applause) at ease; (Laughter) Donald Peek Jr. of Indiana. (Applause)

Our past president is Ray Robinson of South Carolina. (Applause) Our secretary-treasurer is Rita Albregegg of Virginia. (Applause) Our judge advocate is Floyd Watson of Wyoming. (Applause) Our chaplains are Juliet Taylor of Connecticut, (Applause) and Rick (Inaudible) of New Hampshire. (Applause) Our sergeant-at-arms are Sadie Hill of Georgia, (Applause) and Kenny Belew of Tennessee. (Applause)

Our Audit Committee is Thomas Ayala of Florida; (Applause) Matt Kempainen of Wisconsin; (Applause) and Burl Jimmerson of Georgia. (Applause)

Our Constitution and Bylaws are J. Hafford Pandose of Oklahoma; (Applause) Jamie Jakob of Nebraska; (Applause) Nancy Espinosa of Utah. (Applause)

Our Chapter and Resource Guide Committee are Adam Greenhouse of West Virginia; (Applause) Rob Hilliard of Wisconsin; (Applause) and John Hicks of Texas. (Applause)

Would National Commander Espinosa and National Adjutant Jesinoski please join me to receive a presentation?

(Whereupon, the commander and adjutant joined Mr. Johnson at the podium.)

MR. JOHNSON: On behalf of the State Commanders and Adjutants Association I would like to present you with two donations for the National Service Foundation. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I present a donation of \$3,000 to the DAV National Service Foundation. (Applause) And an additional check for \$100 in honor of Past President William Robinson. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the president presented the commander and adjutant with the checks, at which time an official photograph was taken.)

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the president withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium and the adjutant returned to his seat.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Now, ladies and gentlemen, I would like anyone who wants to support the National Service Foundation, Columbia Trust, Charitable Service Trust, or Memorial Foundation but hasn't done so at the booth, to please make your way to the side of the stage to the donation table. I would ask that you do so as quietly as possible. If you have already donated at the booth, please bypass the table and take your place in line.

(Whereupon, members left their seats to prepare to make donations.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Since its incorporation in 1986, the DAV National Service Foundation has safeguarded and buoyed the long-term financial stability needed to support DAV services at every level. Using resources from the Foundation, DAV is able to continue assisting veterans of today and tomorrow in communities, states, and nationwide.

Although one of the Foundation's core missions is to support DAV's daily work to meet the most significant and immediate needs of veterans, increasing public awareness about the Foundation's mission is an extremely important component of what the Foundation does.

When they are able to open the hearts and minds of the American people, they better understand the needs of ill and injured veterans and their families which, in turn, enables all of us to do our part to ensure veterans are properly cared for in the long term.

This includes providing free professional assistance with disability claims and benefits; no-cost transportation to and from medical appointments; and other vital services imperative to the quality of life of veterans and their families.

With "service before self" in mind, it is only fitting and an honor to introduce the president of the DAV National Service Foundation Andy Marshall. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and National Service Foundation President and Past National Commander Andrew "Andy" Marshall advanced to the podium.)

MR. LEWIS: Past National Commander Andy Marshall served in DAV's highest elected position from 2021 to 2022. Marshall, who retired from DAV as a national area supervisor, served multiple leadership positions throughout the organization with more than four decades of service.

The combat-disabled Vietnam veteran is a native of West Virginia and currently resides in Florida and is serving as the adjutant of the Sunshine State.

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER ANDREW "ANDY" MARSHALL: Thank you, Commander, for your kind introduction. Adjutant Jesinoski, national officers, delegates and guests.

I would like to begin this morning's report by introducing the DAV National Service Foundation's Board of Directors: Vice-President Barry Jesinoski; Secretary-Treasurer Joseph Johnston; and our Directors: National Commander Nancy Espinosa; Butch Whitehead, Michael Elmore, Delphine Metcalf-Foster; and Ex-Officio Member Joe Parsetich.

It is my honor and privilege to present this annual convention report to you.

As many of you know, I've been with DAV for nearly half-a-century. And having spent my entire post-military career with DAV, I can unequivocally tell you the National Service Foundation's mission of supporting the work we do on behalf of veterans every day is a vital reason we are able to do it so well.

To stand here as the Foundation's president is a full-circle moment for me. I get to set the next generation of benefits advocates up for success and remind them we've got their backs – reassurances I received during my career.

It is personally gratifying to me to have a chance to be part of DAV history. While serving on the national line I was around many special "firsts." David Riley was our first quadruple amputee to command DAV. Delphine Metcalf-Foster took the helm as the first woman to have the top post. Butch Whitehead was the first post-9/11 veteran to lead. And our current commander, the incomparable Nancy Espinosa, is the first Latina. (Applause)

There's even a record I hold in my own right. At the National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic, I was the first DAV national commander to break 100 with a cigar that stayed continuous lit for 18 holes. (Applause)

Seriously, though, another record was at last year's parade of checks where we exceeded \$1 million in donations. (Applause) To that I owe all of you a debt of gratitude. And I hope we can do it again.

The Foundation is indelibly connected to the heartbeat of DAV, our departments and chapters. The stories we get to hear and the conversations that we have with all of you are a constant reminder of what makes DAV special.

It's a tremendous honor to be part of a critical program that ensures DAV will continue keeping our promise to our nation's veterans for generations to come.

When it comes to keeping our promise, it was a very busy year.

In 2023, DAV service officers submitted more than 209,000 claims for over 611,000 specific injuries and illnesses on behalf of veterans, their families and their survivors. Our service program took over 2.8 million actions to advocate for veterans and their families.

Our benefits advocates, all disabled veterans, are professionals in the truest sense and remain the benchmark of service officers.

The Foundation contributions to the service department's continuous training program and leverages technology assets like i-TRAK to keep our benefits advocates up-to-date.

Of note, total client contributions to the Foundation, which are a generous expression of appreciation for the work of our national service officers and transition service officers, exceeded \$490,000 in 2023. (Applause)

The Foundation's Columbia Trust allows us to distribute resources to DAV departments and chapters in need across the country.

In 2023, the Columbia Trust awarded grants totaling more than \$1.9 million to help chapters and departments provide medical transportation, coordinate volunteerism in hospitals, enable department and chapter service programs, and support and assist other initiatives like those that combat veterans' homelessness.

The Trust also helped chapters and departments purchase more than 100 new vehicles which were donated to the VA as part of the DAV Transportation Network Program.

These vehicles contributed to DAV volunteers providing more than 245,000 no-cost rides to veterans through the DAV Transportation Network. Those volunteers logged more than 575,000 hours and drove over 9.2 million miles. (Applause)

The Transportation Network would not be able to function without the effort of the DAV hospital service coordinators. At 248 medical centers around the country, 149 hospital service coordinators match volunteer drivers with transportation requests from veterans as needed.

The Foundation is grateful to support nearly 240 state-level department service officers and 2,065 chapter service officers who assist with DAV's primary mission of benefits advocacy in their local communities. These volunteers are often the first interaction veterans and their families have with DAV and they represent the very best of who we are as an organization.

In total, in 2023 we disbursed over \$6.5 million to support DAV's mission. The majority of those funds went to the national service program which delivers no-cost professional claims services to veterans throughout the nation. We remain a steadfast ally of DAV to ensure continued advocacy and service for our country's veterans.

Because of careful management, the Foundation's investments totaled \$168 million in 2023 and \$171.5 million in net assets. This means we're able to support the important promise we made to those who've served for so many years.

I'd like to ask National Service Director Jim Marszalek to join me as we present the Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Awards.

(Whereupon, Mr. Marszalek joined National Service Foundation President and Past National Commander Marshall on the stage.)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: These are given to the NSO offices leading their respective divisions in the largest combined total of contributions made in its name at the conclusion of the calendar year.

I'm proud to welcome the 2023 Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Awards winners to the stage to be recognized. Please join me in thanking our incredible national service officers for all they do. (Applause)

MR. LEWIS: Division 1, the DAV National Appeals Office in Washington, D.C., with a total of \$3,650. And accepting the award on their behalf is National Appeals Office Supervisor Aaron Montague. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Division 1 Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Award was presented, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which the recipient withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Division 2, the National Service Office in Togus, Maine, with a total of \$8,980. And accepting the award on their behalf is National Service Office Supervisor Brandon McKinney. Joining him on stage is Kathy McDaniel, a support staff member of the office who just hit 30 years of service through DAV. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Division 2 Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Award was presented, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which the NSO and Ms. McDaniel withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Division 3, the National Service Office in Chicago, Illinois, with a total of \$43,674. And accepting the award on their behalf is National Service Officer Supervisor Robert Nobertowize. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Division 3 Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Award was presented, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which the NSO withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Division 4, the National Service Office in Saint Louis, Missouri with a total of \$62,315. And accepting the award on their behalf is National Area Supervisor Andrew Edwards. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Division 4 Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Award was presented, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which the NSO withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Division 5, the National Service Office in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, with a total of \$20,642. And accepting the award on their behalf is National Area Supervisor Michele Colpaert. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Division 5 Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Award was presented, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which the NSO withdrew from the stage.)

MR. LEWIS: Division 6, the National Service Office in Cleveland, Ohio, with a total of \$30,637. And accepting the award on their behalf is the National Service Office Supervisor Jacob Drost. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Division 6 Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetting Performance Award was presented, at which time an official photograph was taken, after which the NSO withdrew from the stage.)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Please join me again in thanking our incredible national service officers for all they do. (Applause)

As I wrap up my remarks and we get ready to kick off a time of giving, I want to remind you that you can also donate online or by mail at the addresses noted on the screen.

Every cent you donate to the Foundation both supports all the service initiatives we back and ensures DAV is in the best possible position to fulfill its mission.

Whichever method you choose to give, know that it's a way to honor and commemorate our brothers- and sisters-in-arms and show our commitment to America's finest.

To start, I'm pleased to acknowledge contributions from the Moral Rearmament League of \$2,000 and from Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, and Gunner of \$25,000, whose lifetime total now exceeds \$2.9 million. (Applause)

So now it's your turn to speak and show the nation what you and your chapter or department are willing to do to support the cause that brought us here today.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I'd like to start off the giving by an award, a donation from the Moral Rearmament League for \$2,000, bringing the total giving to \$32,700. Thank you. (Applause) To the National Service Foundation.

MRS. BRENDA REED: I have two donations to the National Service Foundation. One is a check from Past National Commander Gregory and myself in the amount of \$100 in memory to Jean Jackson. (Applause)

The second is a donation from Past National Commander Brad Barton and his wife, Donna, to the National Service Foundation in the amount of \$500. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Department of Florida I have \$5,000 for Columbia Trust and \$5,000 for the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, Central Florida Chapter 16, \$2,500 to the Columbia Trust and \$2,500 to the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you, Stanley.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From Phoenix Chapter 1 of Arizona, \$50,000 to the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. PHILIP FIUMARA: Philip (Inaudible) Fiumara, Jr., Chapter 76, donating \$1,000 on behalf of (Inaudible) a past state commander in Chapter 76 and district commander and also on the legislative committee for national. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. MERLINE LEDAY-MAUNEY: Good morning, Chapter 56, department commander Merline Leday-Mauney, we'd like to make a donation to the Foundation of \$1,000. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. CHRISTY CHISHOLM: Hi, Christy Chisholm from Oklahoma, past state Auxiliary commander from Unit 88.

MS. VICI BROWN: And I'm Vici Brown, past department commander, Chapter 43, we're giving \$5,000 that the Juniors raised in Oklahoma to the Disabled, to the Golf Clinic. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you. Thank you, ladies.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Department of Minnesota, \$20,000 to the Golf Classic, \$20,000 to the Sports Clinic, and \$10,000 to the Columbia Trust.

Also, the Foundation from the Department of Minnesota is donating \$20,000 to the Golf Classic, \$20,000 to the Sports Clinic, and \$10,000 to the Service for a total of \$100,000. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Department of Ohio, Chapter 35, we have two donations: \$10,000 to the National Service Foundation and \$10,000 to the Jesse Brown. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. KIMBERLY TATHAM: Kim Tatham from the great State of Missouri and I personally give \$2,000 to the Charitable Service Trust, \$2,000 to the National Service Foundation, and \$2,000 to Disaster Relief, all in honor of our NSO office in St. Louis. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you, Kim.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good morning from the Department of Missouri. We have two donations. The first one is \$25,000 for the Winter Sports Clinic and the second one is \$25,000 in support of the NSO office in St. Louis and in honor of Andrew Edwards. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good morning from the Department of New York. We'd like to give \$25,000 for Disaster Relief, \$25,000 for the National Service Foundation, and \$50,000 for Charitable Service Trust. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) from the Department of Nevada, we give \$1,000 to the National Service Foundation, \$1,000 to the Columbia Trust, \$500 to the Charitable Trust, \$500 to Disabled Veterans Memorial Life Fund, and \$500 to the Just B Kids fund. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. KEVIN GRANTIER: Kevin Grantier, Department of Arizona, \$10,000 to the National Service Foundation, \$5,000 to the Golf Tournament, and I've also been asked to, one of our chapters, Chapter 26 is actually doing \$20,000 to the Golf Tournament. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, Kevin.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of Chapter 20, Glendale, Arizona, we are donating \$10,000 to the Golf Clinic. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) on behalf of the Department of Louisiana, \$1,000 to the Service Foundation Trust. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're welcome.

MR. ROBERT BRONSON: Rob Bronson from the Department of Massachusetts, we're giving \$1,000 to both the National Service Foundation and the Columbia Trust. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. ROBERT CUDWORTH: Bob Cudworth, a member of Chapter 1, Pennsylvania, the second-oldest chapter in the nation, make a \$1,500 contribution in memory of my brother Elmer, a World War II (Inaudible) pilot who was killed in action on January 19th, 1945; my brother Kenneth who was a corpsman first class in the Korean War who passed away on August 3rd, 1995; and my wife Edna, a U.S. Army nurse and subsequently an Army wife who passed away on January 9th, 2023. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

MR. ROLLY LEE: Rolly Lee, state aid from the Department of Michigan, we bring you greetings from Pure Michigan and your and my 2003 national football champions, Michigan Wolverines. (Laughter) Five thousand dollars to the National Service Foundation, commander. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, Rolly. Thank you.

MS. LOLITA TUCKER: On behalf of Department of Michigan, PDC Lolita Tucker, \$5,000 to the Disaster Relief Fund. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. BRIAN FOGG: Also from the State of Michigan, I'm Commander Brian Fogg, \$5,000 to the Columbia Trust Fund. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Department commander of the State of Tennessee, \$2,500, Columbia Trust, and \$5,000 for Mid-Winter. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

MS. LINDA LEE: Senior Vice-Commander Linda Lee from Tuscaloosa Chapter 1, Department of Alabama, contributing \$3,000 to the National Service Foundation. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, ma'am.

MR. JEFF WITTNEBEN: I'm Jeff Wittneben, commander, Department of Ohio, we're donating \$50,000 to the National Service Foundation, and \$10,000 to the Charitable Service Trust. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, Jeff.

MR. MIKE STITH: I'm Mike Stith, adjutant, Department of Ohio, can't say enough good about our NSOs, a \$1,000 donation in honor of Jake Drost, Alex (Inaudible) and our leadership and NSOs at the Cleveland office. That's to the National Service Foundation. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thanks, Mike.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good morning from the great State of Louisiana. Chapter 30 in Shreveport, Louisiana is proud to donate \$10,000 to the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. STEPHEN STANTOS: Stephen Santos, past department commander, Department of Maine, a personal donation in the memory of my dad, U.S. Marine Joseph "Jose" Santos of \$50. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

MR. KENNETH WILSON: Kenneth Wilson from the Department of Illinois, representing Chapter 17, \$5,000 Golf Clinic; \$5,000 for the Winter Sports Clinic, \$5,000 for Disaster Relief, \$10,000 for National Service Foundation.

In memory of Carla Reynolds who is Al Reynolds' deceased wife, Chapter 17 Auxiliary is donating \$2,500 to Just B Kids and, least but not last, \$500 to Caregivers. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. KURT MYERS: Kurt Myers, Chapter 42, Illinois, on behalf of the Department of Illinois, \$5,000 to the Golf Clinic, \$5,000 to the Winter Sports Clinic, \$5,000 to the DAV Disaster Relief, and \$5,000 to the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. MARCIA STEWART: Good morning, Marcia Stewart, Department of Virginia, \$20,000 to the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. CYNTHIA BAILEY: Good morning, Cynthia Bailey, past department commander from the great State of Virginia. We're making a donation to the Golf Clinic of \$40,000. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. RICHARD LEHMANN: Good morning, Rich Lehmann, commander, department of Virginia, \$40,000 to the Winter Sports Clinic. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. SCOTT FELDT: Good morning, Scott Feldt, chapter commander, Chapter 7 from the great State of Colorado. We would like to donate \$2,000 to the DAV Winter Sports fund, \$1,000 to the DAV National Service Foundation in honor of the elite NSOs in the State of Colorado, and \$1,000 to the DAV Columbia Trust Fund. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

MR. KEITH D. RHODES: Good morning, Keith D. Rhodes from the Department of Georgia. We give \$2,000 for the Columbia Trust and \$2,000 for the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. ADAM GREATHOUSE: Adam Greathouse, Department of West Virginia commander, a donation of \$1,000 to the National Service Foundation from the Huntington, West Virginia Chapter 2 in honor of and memory of Jerry Tyes. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thanks, Adam.

MR. MARK ROEHM: Mark Roehm, Department of Florida, I have a \$100 donation from Mr. and Mrs. Wilkerson, a veteran who was assisted in his claim and wanted to show appreciation to the service officers for the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In memory of Chapter 18, Florida, we give \$25,000 to this year's Golf Clinic and \$25,000 to next year's and \$25,000 to Just B Kids and \$25,000 to our new Caregivers program. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Chapter 2, Missouri, \$20,000 to Winter Sports Clinic in honor of Andrew Edwards. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In honor of Andrew Edwards from the DAV Kansas City, Missouri, Ernestine Schumann-Hicks Chapter 2, \$50,000 to the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) Chapter 2, Missouri, I have \$5,000 for the Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic in honor of Andrew Edwards. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. LEON BOOKER: Leon Booker, commander of William E. Tate Chapter Number 1 from the great State of Georgia, we make a donation of \$2,000 to the Columbia Trust. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, Leon.

MR. JAMES HUNTER: James Hunter from the great State of North Carolina, commander, donate \$1,000 to the National Service Foundation and an additional \$1,000 to the Columbia Trust. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. MATT KEMPAINEN: Matt Kempainen, Chapter 3, adjutant of Green Bay, Wisconsin – go pack, go – I'd like to donate \$10,000 to the Charitable Service Trust in honor of past national commander and past president of the Charitable Service Trust, Richard Marbes. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) from Department of Nebraska, commander, we are donating for the Disaster Relief Fund \$3,000 and for the Columbia Trust \$7,000. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. RICHARD STEADMAN: I'm Rick Steadman, commander, Department of Alabama, I'd like to donate \$10,000 to the Disaster Relief Fund in memory of Richard Patterson; also, I'd like to remind our adjutant, Hugo Perez, roll tide. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Howdy, y'all. From the Lone Star State of Texas, the Blue Bonnet Chapter 20, CSO Bobbi-Jo, we're donating \$1,000 to the National Service Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the State of Pennsylvania, past department commander and commander, \$1,000 to the National Foundation. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. ERNIE BOISVERT: Ernie Boisvert, chapter adjutant and treasurer for Chapter 12 in Rhode Island, \$500 for the National Service Foundation and \$500 for the Columbia Trust. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

MR. GREGORY PALO: Gregory Palo, commander, Department of Wisconsin, making a donation to the National Service Foundation for the Department of Wisconsin, \$2,000. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

MS. JOAN SABREE: Good morning, Joan Sabree from magnificent Maryland, senior vice-commander, \$5,000 to Disaster Relief Fund and \$1,000 to National Service Foundation. (Applause)
NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. DANIEL MURPHY: Dan Murphy, the adjutant of the Department of Idaho, I'm going to donate \$250 and I'm thinking of our Gold Star Mothers up in Idaho who have, and their families. We have about 85 fallen since 9/11 so I'm thinking of the Gold Star Mothers in Idaho. Thank you. (Applause)
NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. SHERRY STEPHENSON: Sherry Stephenson, adjutant of Chapter 158 in New York, donates, our chapter donates \$1,000 to Just B Kids in honor of Samuel "Sid" Gordon, our World War II chaplain who just passed in February. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. ANITA L. FRANKLIN: Hello, everyone. I'm Anita L. Franklin from the great State of Texas, Chapter 128, San Antonio, Texas. We are making our donation to Columbia Trust for \$1,500. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you.

MR. PHELLEP SNOW: Good morning. Phellep Snow and (Inaudible) here on behalf of Chapter 12, Henderson, Nevada, donating \$1,000 to the Columbia Trust on behalf of the (Inaudible) family who are esteemed members of our chapter. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Thank you. How are you today?

MS. NANCY BISHOP HARVEY: Good, how are you? (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER
MARSHALL: Great.

MS. BISHOP HARVEY: Well, hi, everybody. I'm Nancy Bishop Harvey. I'm a Seattleite. I'm a U.S. Coast Guard veteran. And I'm donating \$100 to Disaster Relief. And my husband, I want him to be recognized – I lost him two years ago – Douglas Harvey, U.S. Coast Guard, the best Coastie I've ever met. Semper Parades. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER

MARSHALL: Thank you. Thank you. You are all wonderfully generous. Thank you. Our donation totals for all programs \$1,081,333. (Standing Ovation) Of course, that is thanks to all of you and, unfortunately, the donations to Disaster Relief will probably be used very soon.

Your gifts to the DAV National Service Foundation are truly empowering veterans to build successful, fulfilled lives. And your generosity goes a long way to ensuring DAV's critical services and programs. I look forward to another successful year working on behalf of those we serve.

Commander, this concludes my report. (Applause)

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) National Service Foundation

Financial Statements as of and for the
Year Ended December 31, 2023, and
Independent Auditor's Report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Directors of
DAV (Disabled American Veterans) National Service Foundation:

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of DAV (Disabled American Veterans) National Service Foundation (the "Foundation"), which comprise the statement of financial position as of December 31, 2023, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cashflows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements (collectively referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Foundation as of December 31, 2023, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Foundation and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern for one year after the date that the financial statements are issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement

resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Foundation's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Deloitte + Touche LLP

April 9, 2024

**DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS)
NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023**

ASSETS

CASH	\$ 3,573,515
INTEREST AND DIVIDENDS RECEIVABLE	34,354
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	33,501
INVENTORIES	119
PREPAID EXPENSES	15,364
INVESTMENTS	168,003,131
OTHER ASSETS	<u>5,284</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 171,665,268</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES:

Due to Disabled American Veterans	\$ 141,815
Other liabilities	<u>36,921</u>
Total liabilities	<u>178,736</u>

NET ASSETS:

Without donor restrictions:	
Perpetual Rehabilitation Fund	88,735,312
The Columbia Trust	<u>1,175,123</u>
Total net assets without donor restrictions	<u>89,910,435</u>

With donor restrictions:	
Purpose restricted for mission	81,344,404
Purpose restricted for DAV Legislative Fund	<u>231,693</u>
Total net assets with donor restrictions	<u>81,576,097</u>

Total net assets	<u>171,486,532</u>
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TOTAL	<u>\$ 171,665,268</u>
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See notes to financial statements.

**DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS)
NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION**

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

		With Donor Restrictions			
	Without Donor Restrictions	Purpose Restricted	Purpose Restricted Columbia Trust	Purpose Restricted DAV Legislative	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUES:					
Contributions and bequests	\$ 1,662,247	2,000	\$ 1,519,537	\$ -	\$ 3,183,784
Net investment return	10,614,811	9,942,872	21,896	-	20,579,579
Net assets released from restrictions	3,744,333	(2,202,900)	(1,541,433)	-	-
	<u>16,021,391</u>	<u>7,741,972</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>23,763,363</u>
Total support and revenues					
EXPENSES:					
Program expenses:					
Grants and expenses in accordance with The Columbia Trust	1,967,256	-	-	-	1,967,256
Appropriations to DAV National Headquarters and other organizations	4,554,814	-	-	-	4,554,814
	<u>6,522,070</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,522,070</u>
Total program expenses					
Management and general expenses	161,696	-	-	-	161,696
Fundraising expenses	165,522	-	-	-	165,522
	<u>6,849,288</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,849,288</u>
Total expenses					
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	9,172,103	7,741,972	-	-	16,914,075
NET ASSETS—Beginning of year	80,738,332	73,602,432	-	231,693	154,572,457
NET ASSETS—End of year	<u>\$89,910,435</u>	<u>\$81,344,404</u>	<u>\$-</u>	<u>\$231,693</u>	<u>\$171,486,532</u>

See notes to financial statements.

**DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS)
NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION**

**STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	Program	Management and General	Fundraising	Total
EXPENSES:				
Allocations to charitable programs	\$6,459,314	\$ -	\$ -	\$6,459,314
Administrative charges	-	60,052	11,469	71,521
Grant proposal processing	60,052	-	-	60,052
Printing, stationery, and supplies	148	2,795	77,754	80,697
Postage and shipping	-	2,395	62,707	65,102
Professional fees	-	43,715	-	43,715
Banking and credit card fees	2,556	15,375	-	17,931
Registration fees	-	3,826	6,752	10,578
Legal fees	-	-	6,840	6,840
Awards	-	10,596	-	10,596
Travel	-	11,466	-	11,466
Insurance	-	4,166	-	4,166
Maintenance	-	4,210	-	4,210
Depreciation	-	2,114	-	2,114
Miscellaneous	-	986	-	986
TOTAL	\$6,522,070	\$161,696	\$165,522	\$6,849,288

See notes to financial statements.

**DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS)
NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION**

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:	
Change in net assets	\$ 16,914,073
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash used in operating activities:	
Net change in (appreciation) depreciation of investments	(12,242,767)
Net gain on sale of investments	(4,351,031)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:	
Interest and dividends receivable	(8,017)
Accounts receivable	(13,109)
Inventories	-
Prepaid expenses	(2,749)
Due to Disabled American Veterans	20,202
Other liabilities	<u>9,190</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>325,792</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:	
Purchases of investment securities	(23,730,998)
Proceeds from sale of investment securities	24,315,101
Other	<u>2,114</u>
Net cash provided by investing activities	<u>586,217</u>
NET INCREASE IN CASH	912,009
CASH—Beginning of year	<u>2,661,506</u>
CASH—End of year	<u>\$ 3,573,515</u>

See notes to financial statements.

DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS) NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS OF AND FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

1. ORGANIZATION

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) National Service Foundation (the “Foundation”) is a financial auxiliary of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV). The purpose of the Foundation, as set forth in Article 3 of the Articles of Incorporation, is as follows:

“To receive and maintain a fund or funds of personal or real property, or both; to solicit and obtain contributions from the public; and, subject to the restrictions set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, to use and apply the whole or any part of the income and principal of said fund exclusively for the promotion of social welfare (including incidental nonpartisan legislative activity in furtherance of such purpose) within the meaning of Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, primarily for the assistance, aid, maintenance, care, support, and rehabilitation of disabled veterans and their dependents, either directly or by contributions to the DAV, a Congressionally chartered organization, or any chapter or department thereof.”

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Financial Statements—The accompanying financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAP).

New Accounting Standards—In June 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-13, *Financial Instruments—Credit Losses*, which is included in ASC Topic 326, *Measurement of Credit Losses on Financial Instruments*. The new standard requires a financial asset (or group of financial assets) measured at amortized cost basis, such as trade receivables, to be presented at the net amount expected to be collected. Investments held at fair value where the change in fair value is reported through the change in net assets, as occurs at the Foundation, as well as pledge receivables, are excluded from the scope of ASU 2016-13. The new standard revises the accounting requirements related to the measurement of credit losses and will require organizations to measure all expected credit losses for financial assets based on historical experience, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts about collectability. The adoption of ASU 2016-13 did not have a material impact on the financial statements and related disclosures. There were no credit losses recorded for the year-ended December 31, 2023.

Cash—The Foundation considers all liquid instruments purchased with a maturity date of three months or less to be cash equivalents that are stated at cost, which approximates fair value. The earnings credit received on the Foundation’s checking accounts were \$77,889 in 2023, which is included within Net Investment Return within the Statement of Activities. The Foundation maintains its cash in bank deposit accounts, which, at times, exceed federally insured limits. The Foundation has not experienced any losses in such accounts.

Inventories—Inventory consists of solicitation materials and other items.

Investments—Investments are recorded at fair value. The fair value of the Foundation’s investments is determined based on the quoted market prices of the related securities or quoted prices in active markets for instruments that are similar or model-derived valuations in which all significant inputs and significant value drivers are observable in active markets. Gains and losses on the sale of investment securities are recognized based upon the specific identification method and are reflected as a separate component of revenue for the investments of the Foundation. The Foundation’s policy is to report its cash and cash equivalents within its investment trust accounts, which include money market funds, within investments on the statement of financial positions.

Contributions—The Foundation recognizes contributions when cash, securities or other assets; an unconditional promise to give; or a notification of a beneficial interest is received. Conditional promises to give—that is, those with a measurable performance or other barrier and a right of return—are not recognized until the conditions on which they depend have been met.

Contributions, including bequests, received are recorded as support with or without donor restrictions, depending on the existence and nature of any donor restrictions. Donated assets are recorded at their fair market value at the time of the donation.

Contributed Nonfinancial Assets—For the year ended December 31, 2023, there were no contributed nonfinancial assets received. Should nonfinancial assets be received, they would be separately recognized within the statement of activities and disclosed within the notes to the financial statements.

Net Assets without Donor Restrictions—All contributions and bequests without donor restrictions to the Foundation are designated by the board of directors (the “Board”) for investment in a Board-designated endowment fund, known as the Perpetual Rehabilitation Fund, as a reserve for future needs.

Investment income derived from these invested amounts is included in net assets without donor restrictions and used for current operations of the Foundation or appropriated by the Foundation for use by DAV.

Appropriations to the Columbia Trust are excluded from the statement of activities due to the transactions being an internal appropriation. There was \$900,000 appropriated to The Columbia Trust in 2023.

For 2023, the Board has designated \$1,175,123 as total unrestricted net assets for The Columbia Trust and are not included in the Board-designated endowment fund. The Columbia Trust recorded an increase in unrestricted net assets of \$534,229 in 2023. Unrealized appreciation (depreciation) of investments is designated to The Columbia Trust’s net assets from the unrestricted general fund.

Net Assets with Donor Restrictions—Funds considered with donor restriction for mission are restricted by their purpose to being invested prudently and used in fulfilling the Foundation’s mission. As of December 31, 2023, the net assets with donor restrictions of \$81,344,404 are included within the investments balance in the statement of financial position.

Funds contributed to The Columbia Trust are matched 100% by DAV, up to a maximum of \$3,000,000 per year. In 2023, The Columbia Trust received \$143,044 in contributions, which were matched by DAV. In 2023, The Columbia Trust received \$1,233,446, from the DAV Charitable Service Trust to be used for the DAV Transportation Network Vehicle Grant Program.

Contributions for the DAV Legislative Program are considered contributions with donor restriction. Investment income of \$7,414 in 2023 from the DAV Legislative Fund was transferred to DAV for use by DAV's Legislative Program. The net assets with donor restrictions of \$231,693 as of December 31, 2023, are included within the investments balance in the statement of financial position.

Allocation of Expenses—The financial statements report certain categories of expenses that are attributable to one or more program or supporting services of the organization. Those expenses include grant proposal processing, administrative charges, postage and shipping, printing, stationery and supplies, legal fees and registration fees. All expenses are allocated based on estimates of time and effort toward each program or supporting service. Allocation estimates are reviewed annually based on the specific expense and adjusted accordingly.

Income Taxes—As a not-for-profit service organization, the Foundation has received a determination from the Internal Revenue Service that it is exempt from federal income taxes as a Section 501(c)(4) organization. Contributions made to the Foundation are tax deductible by the contributor as provided in Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Use of Estimates—The preparation of the financial statements in accordance with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

3. ENDOWMENT FUNDS

The following table represents the composition of the Foundation's endowment net assets by type of fund for the year ended December 31, 2023:

	Without Donor Restrictions
Board designated Perpetual Rehabilitation Fund	<u>\$88,735,312</u>

The Foundation's Board-designated endowment fund included in net assets without donor restrictions, also known as the Perpetual Rehabilitation Fund, for the year ended December 31, 2023, had the following activity:

Net assets—beginning of year	<u>\$ 80,097,438</u>
Public support—contributions and bequests	1,662,247
Revenues—net investment return	<u>10,614,809</u>
Total public support and revenue	<u>12,277,056</u>
Expenses:	
Program:	
Appropriations to DAV National Headquarters and other organizations	2,351,913
Internal appropriation to the Columbia Trust	900,000
Grant proposal processing	<u>60,052</u>
Total program expenses	3,311,965
Management and general	161,696
Fundraising	<u>165,522</u>
Total expenses	<u>3,639,182</u>
Total change in Board-designated endowment fund	<u>8,637,874</u>
Net assets—end of year	<u>\$ 88,735,312</u>

4. LIQUIDITY AND AVAILABILITY OF FINANCIAL ASSETS

The Foundation's working capital and cash flows are attributable to the contributions received throughout the year. As of December 31, 2023, the Foundation's financial assets (total assets, less inventory, prepaid expenses and other assets) totaled \$171,644,501. The financial assets, with the exception of the donor-restricted by purpose for DAV Legislative Fund investment of \$231,693 as of December 31, 2023, are available to fund general expenditures within one year following the statement of financial position date. Donor restricted funds of \$81,344,404 for 2023 have been included because they are restricted for programs considered general expenditures by the organization. The Foundation has an investment spending policy that would allow for withdrawals from the long-term investment portfolio, from both general assets without donor restrictions and with donor restriction purpose restricted for its mission.

The Foundation has a policy to structure its financial assets to be available as its program, fundraising, management, and general expenses become due. In addition, as part of its liquidity management, the Foundation invests cash in excess of daily requirements in various short-term and long-term investments. The short-term investments are invested for capital preservation and liquidity for cash flow requirements in money market funds. The Foundation's long-term investments, such as marketable fixed-income and equity securities, index and actively managed mutual funds, and Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), are invested with the intent of providing a safe return on investments for future use.

5. FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENTS

ASC Topic 820 provides a framework for measuring fair value. The framework provides a fair value hierarchy that prioritizes the inputs to valuation techniques used to measure fair value as follows: Level 1, which refers to securities valued using unadjusted quoted prices from active markets for identical assets; Level 2, which refers to securities not traded on an active market, but for which observable market inputs are readily available; and Level 3, which refers to securities valued based on significant unobservable inputs. Assets are classified in their entirety based on the lowest level of input that is significant to the fair value measurement.

The Foundation did not hold any financial assets requiring the use of inputs that are unobservable and significant (Level 3) to the overall fair value measurement during 2023.

The Foundation's policy is to recognize transfers between levels at the actual date of the event. There were no transfers during 2023.

Asset Valuation Techniques—Valuation techniques used maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs. The following is a description of the valuation methodologies used for assets recorded at fair value. There have been no changes in the methodologies used at December 31, 2023.

Cash equivalents, composed of money market funds, are categorized as Level 1, and are valued at cost, which approximates fair value. The money market funds represent the Foundation's shares in a registered investment company's fund.

Common stock securities and ETFs held are categorized as Level 1. They are valued at the closing price reported in the active market in which the individual security is traded.

Corporate bonds are categorized as Level 2, and are valued using third-party pricing services. These services may use, for example, model-based pricing methods that utilize observable market data as inputs. Broker-dealer bids or quotes of securities with similar characteristics may also be used.

Shares of registered investment companies (mutual funds) are categorized as Level 1. They are valued at quoted market prices that represent the net asset value of shares held at year-end.

The major categories of financial assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis as of December 31, 2023, are as follows:

	Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Total
Asset category:			
Cash equivalents	<u>\$ 1,011,172</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 1,011,172</u>
Common stocks	<u>22,728,186</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>22,728,186</u>
Corporate bonds	<u>-</u>	<u>27,696,005</u>	<u>27,696,005</u>
Mutual funds/ETFs:			
Domestic fixed income funds	30,422,987	-	30,422,987
Domestic equity funds	57,452,176	-	57,452,176
International equity funds	24,692,353	-	24,692,353
Real estate equity funds	<u>4,000,252</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,000,252</u>
Total mutual funds/ETFs	<u>116,567,768</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>116,567,768</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 140,307,126</u>	<u>\$ 27,696,005</u>	<u>\$ 168,003,131</u>

The Foundation has adopted an investment policy for the Perpetual Rehabilitation Fund and investments with donor restrictions. The primary goals of the investment portfolio are safeguarding of the assets; maximizing return on the interest, dividends, and appreciation of capital; and avoiding undue interest rate risk in the fixed-income portion of the portfolio. The portfolio performance objective is to exceed a custom benchmark of 60% Russell 3000/40% Barclays Intermediate Government Credit over a five-year period and a full market cycle.

The Foundation relies on a total return strategy in which investment returns are achieved through both capital appreciation and current yield (interest and dividends). The Foundation targets a diversified asset allocation that places a greater emphasis on equity-based investment to achieve its long-term return objective within prudent risk constraints.

6. NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DONOR RESTRICTIONS

Net assets are released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes specified by donors. The net assets released from restrictions are as follows:

Purpose restrictions accomplished:	
Purpose restriction—mission	\$ 2,202,900
The Columbia Trust	<u>1,541,433</u>
Net assets released from restrictions	<u>\$ 3,744,333</u>

7. RELATED-PARTY TRANSACTIONS

During 2023, DAV personnel assisted the Foundation on a limited basis in administering its business operations and fundraising program. For these services, the Foundation reimbursed DAV \$131,572. At December 31, 2023, the Foundation owed DAV \$141,815. DAV provides the Foundation with the use of facilities, equipment and occasional magazine space at no charge.

As discussed in Note 2, DAV contributed \$143,044 to the Columbia Trust in 2023.

In 2023, the DAV Charitable Service Trust made contributions of \$1,233,446, to The Columbia Trust for the DAV Transportation Network Vehicle Grant Program.

In 2023, the Foundation appropriated \$4,547,400 in support of DAV programs and services.

In performing the duties of their positions, DAV’s National Commander and National Adjutant serve on the Foundation’s Board. In performing the duties of their positions as a Foundation Director, some members also serve on the DAV Charitable Service Trust’s Board and the Disabled Veterans’ Life Memorial Foundation’s Board.

8. GRANTS AND EXPENSES OF THE COLUMBIA TRUST

At December 31, 2023, grants and expenses of The Columbia Trust are as follows:

Grants to DAV chapters and departments in accordance with The Columbia Trust:	
Hospital Service Coordinator Program	\$ 530,881
Transportation Network Vehicle Grant Program	1,215,319
Other grants to service programs	158,300
Grant proposal processing	60,052
Miscellaneous expenses	<u>2,704</u>
 Total	 <u>\$ 1,967,256</u>

In 2023, temporarily restricted net assets of \$1,541,433 and net assets without donor restrictions of \$425,823 were used.

9. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

No other events have occurred after December 31, 2023, but before April 9, 2024, the date the financial statements were available to be issued, that require consideration as adjustments to, or disclosures in, the financial statements.

* * * * *

(Whereupon, National Service Foundation President and Past National Commander Marshall withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. Thank you for that outstanding report. May I have a motion to accept the report for the National Service Foundation?

MR. MAURACE CLARK: Mic 1.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 1.

MR. CLARK: Maurace Clark, Chapter 47, Department of Washington so moves.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: May I have a second.

MR. HENRY SPADY: Mic 3.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 3.

MR. SPADY: Henry Spady, chapter, Naomi Chapter 15, Pennsylvania, I second that motion.

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered.

NATIONAL SERVICE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MARSHALL: Thank you.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Andy.

(Whereupon, National Service Foundation President and Past National Commander Marshall withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I would like to call on Chairman Rob Reynolds for the final report of the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee Chair advanced to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER ROBERT REYNOLDS: Comrade Commander and delegates, good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER REYNOLDS: I will now proceed with the second reading of the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws which are recommended for adoption. In the interest of time, again, I will read only the number and purpose of the resolutions.

Resolution Number 446, amend Article III, Section 3.6, Paragraph 1 of the Bylaws to allow for two delegates and two alternates for each state department at the national convention rather than one delegate and one alternate per department;

Resolution Number 561, amend Article III, Section 3.5, Paragraph 1 of the Bylaws to increase the national convention registration fee from \$25 to \$35 for each delegate, alternate, and visitor attending national convention;

Resolution Number 562, amend Article III, Section 3.5, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to increase the amount to be deposited into the national convention fund per chapter. The increase would consist of: for chapters with 100 members or less increase from \$20 to \$30; for chapters with 101 to 1,000 members, increase from \$40 to \$60; for chapters with 1,001 to 3,000 members increase from \$60 to \$90; and for chapters with 3,001 members or more increase from \$80 to \$120;

Resolution Number 563, amend Article VIII, Section 8.4, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to increase the amount required to prompt a CPA review for departments with gross annual income, excluding all income from the national organization, from \$300,000 to \$500,000;

Resolution Number 564, amend Article IX, Section 9.3, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to increase the amount required to prompt a CPA review for chapters with gross annual income, excluding all income from the national organization, from \$300,000 to \$500,000;

Resolution Number 565, amend Article X, Section 10.1, Paragraph 3 of the Bylaws to increase the amount required to prompt a CPA review for Auxiliary and other subordinate entities with gross annual income, excluding all income from the national organization, from \$300,000 to \$500,000;

Resolution Number 566, amend Article XVIII, Section 18.3, Paragraph 1 of the Bylaws to allow the National Adjutant to determine the reasonable time necessary for subordinate entities required to spenddown funds to satisfy compliance with Article XVIII, Section 18.2 of the Bylaws;

Resolution Number 567, amend Article XVIII, Section 18.3, Paragraph 2 of the Bylaws to permit the National Adjutant to determine whether the expenditure of funds are being spent for service purposes for subordinate entities required to spenddown funds to satisfy compliance with Article XVIII, Section 18.2, of the Bylaws.

Comrade Commander, on behalf of the Committee I move that the Committee recommendations be accepted, that the resolutions be adopted, and the Committee be discharged with the thanks of the National Convention.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chair withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Rob. (Applause) You have heard the motion. May I have a second?

MS. RITA ABEREGG: Mic 3.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 3.

MS. ABEREGG: Rita Aberegg, Department of Virginia, makes the motion – makes the second.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. In accordance with Rule 9, now is the time for any rejected resolutions to be read. Are there any rejected resolutions that you wish read? Hearing none, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. The motion is carried.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER REYNOLDS: Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Rob. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws chair withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Adjutant Jesinoski, do you have any announcements?

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: Boy, Andy left a hell of a mess up here. (Laughter) No checks, just a bunch of papers and IOUs. Immediately following this morning's business session, the final meeting of the Nominating Committee will be held in West 101C.

This afternoon's final business session will promptly begin at 1:30. We will start off with the important business of nominations and election of our officers please be on time.

And we are giving away three \$75 gift certificates that can be redeemed at our DAV store online or here during the convention. You must be present to win, as always. If I call your name and you are here, please see Membership Director Doug Wells right in front of the stage right down here as soon as we adjourn.

The lucky today are Lauri Brooke, Minnesota Number 38, (Applause) Mary Twiggs, Maryland Number 36; (Applause) and John Long, South Carolina Number 20. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Adjutant Jesinoski withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Barry. Chaplain Varner Dancer, will you please lead us in prayer.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Almighty and Great Sovereign God, once again we thank you for the gift of unity. We thank you, oh, God, for the gift of us, our ability in being able to work together, to strengthen one another, being unified, knowing that in all of our greatness it cancels out our weakness.

So as we go forth and continue looking forward to greater things that we can come together of one mind, one body, making one sound we give all thanks unto you. And for all of those who have contributed to this great organization and this great meeting we ask your blessings upon us. These and all things we ask and receive. And the people said Amen.

(Response of "Amen." Whereupon, the chaplain withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: The Convention stands in recess until 1:30 this afternoon.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed at 11:11 o'clock, a.m. on Tuesday, August 6, 2024.)

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FINAL BUSINESS SESSION

August 6, 2024

- - -

The Final Business Session of the Disabled American Veterans 102nd National Convention convened in the convened in Room West 301B through D of the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on Tuesday afternoon, August 6, 2024, and was called to order at 1:31 o'clock, p.m., by National Commander Nancy G. Espinosa.

COMMANDER NANCY G. ESPINOSA: The Convention will please come to order. As a reminder, I would like to ask everyone to please silence your cell phone and portable devices. (Three raps of the gavel)

Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. Hand salute.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Two. We will now be led in prayer by Chaplain Varner Dancer.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN DEBRA VARNER DANCER: Good afternoon.

(Response of "Good afternoon.")

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Almighty Creator of all mankind, it's once again that we're assembling in this place to truly be thankful for what you've done for us thus far.

As you bless us, help us to continue to not only bless our family, our friends, our fellow comrades, but to continue to honor this great nation, with the standing as one through this great organization called the Disabled American Veterans. We do thank you and we do appreciate you. We give all thanks unto you. And the people said Amen.

(Response of "Amen;" whereupon, the chaplain withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. Just to let you know, Joseph Hall of North Dakota who had an event this morning is doing well. He's returned from the hospital. He was a little dehydrated, overheated, but he's well and he's back. (Applause)

(One rap of the gavel.) Sorry. As a reminder, in order for a delegate to be heard at this Convention you must be recognized by the chair. Only those delegates at a microphone will be recognized. Upon being so recognized, the delegates must state their name, chapter number, and the state they represent.

I would like to remind everyone that the registration of delegates is now closed. I will call upon Chairperson Brenda Reed for the final report of the Credentials Committee.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Credentials Committee chair advanced to the podium.)

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIR BRENDA REED: Good afternoon.

(Response of "Good afternoon.")

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIR REED: National Commander Espinosa, National Adjutant Jesinoski, national line officers, delegates, members, and guests. This is the final report of the Credentials Committee. It reflects the total registration as of 10:00 a.m. on August 6th, 2024.

There are 1,010 delegates and 48 alternates registered, which represents 42 departments and 345 chapters. There are 9 national officers, 20 National Executive Committeemen, and 15 past national commanders currently registered for a total of 44 national officers. The vote total is 7,548.

At this time I would like to extend my thanks to the Committee members and the advisors.

Madam Commander, this completes the final report of the Credentials Committee. And on behalf of the committee, I move for its adoption.

(Whereupon, the Credentials Committee chair withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: You have heard the motion. May I have a second?

MR. NACHEE MILLER: Mic 2.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 2.

MR. MILLER: Nachee Miller, Chapter 3, Department of the District of Columbia, second the motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you. All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Credentials Committee chair withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Now, I will call on Butch Whitehead of the Nominating Committee for his report. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Nominating Committee chair advanced to the podium.)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEPHEN "BUTCH" WHITEHEAD: The National Convention Committee on Nominations of National Officers was called to order for its first business session on August 3rd, 2024, by the Committee advisors Joseph Johnston and Al Church.

The first order of business was the election of a convention committee chairperson and a secretary. I, Stephen Whitehead, was elected as chairperson and Joseph Kaufman was elected as secretary.

The Committee on Nominations of National Officers met again Sunday, August 4th, at 1:00 p.m., and again today the committee met at 11:00 a.m. The Nominating Committee recommends and nominates the following individuals for national office:

For the office of National Commander, Dan Contreras from California; (Applause) for the office of National Senior Vice-Commander Coleman Nee from Massachusetts; (Applause) for the office of National First Junior Vice-Commander, John Donovan from Arkansas; (Applause)

for the office of National Second Junior Vice-Commander, Cynthia Madison from Virginia; (Applause) for the office of National Third Junior Vice-Commander, James Procnier, North Carolina; (Applause) and for the office of National Fourth Junior Vice-Commander, Glen Hohman from Arizona; (Applause)

for the office of National Chaplain, Debra Varner Dancer from Alabama; (Applause) and for the office of National Judge Advocate, Michael Dobmeier from North Dakota. (Applause)

Comrade Commander, this completes this report of the Committee on Nominations of National Officers. On behalf of the Committee I move the adoption of this report.

(Whereupon, the Nominating Committee chair withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you for your report, Butch. I will now call for a second that the report of the Committee on Nominations of National Officers be adopted and that the committee be discharged.

MR. STEPHEN SANTOS: Mic 2.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 2.

MR. SANTOS: Stephen Santos, Chapter 19, Department of Maine, second the motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed. So ordered.

(Whereupon, the Nominating Committee chair withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: You have heard the report of the Committee on Nomination of National Officers and they have nominated Dan Contreras of California for National Commander. Here to second the nomination is Past DAV National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and Ms. Metcalf-Foster advanced to the podium.)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER DELPHINE METCALF-FOSTER: Thank you, Commander. Good afternoon.

(Response of "Good afternoon.")

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER METCALF-FOSTER: It is my sincere privilege to second the nomination of a fellow Californian, veteran, and dedicated advocate.

Daniel Contreras lives in Sherman Oaks, California, and is a proud life member of Chapter 99. In 1999, he became a DAV life member and has since been involved with the organization at the chapter, department and national levels.

In 1980, Dan joined the Army and served as a combat medic, an Army nurse for 16 years, achieving the rank of sergeant first class.

During his time in uniform, Dan traveled from his home in California to Washington State, Indiana and, although at the risk of dating us both, a county formerly called "West Germany."

Dan's journey to DAV began like many of ours. He was helped by DAV. Then an old friend told him that service through DAV could give him a new path in life. Shortly after that encounter, Dan's professional career with DAV began. In 2000, he started as a benefits advocate before being promoted to national area supervisor in 2006.

In 2008, he took the reins as adjutant and treasurer for DAV's Department of California, a position in which he currently still serves. Dan is a past department commander, former member of DAV's National Executive Committee, and has served on the Board of Directors for the DAV National Service Foundation for ten years.

In addition to his various leadership and managerial positions within the state and national levels of the organization, he was also appointed to chair the California Mexican-American Veterans Memorial Committee by California Governors Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jerry Brown.

Dan's empathy, integrity, and devotion to duty are the exact qualities we need in our leaders. From his military career to continued service both at DAV national and the Department of California, Daniel's life has been one completely dedicated to the service of others.

As a Latino with strong family ties to the military, Dan's commitment to helping all those who have worn our nation's uniform is second-to-none. His unique experience and leadership will guide DAV's mission to reach all ill and injured veterans, which makes us a stronger organization and community.

And so, it is with great esteemed privilege that I nominate Daniel Contreras for DAV National Commander 2024 to 2025. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Ms. Metcalf-Foster withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: The chair will now call for any further nominations for the office of national commander. Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel)

If there are no further nominations, I close the nominations and declare Daniel Contreras selected as national commander and instruct the national adjutant to cast one unanimous ballot for his election. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: I, Barry Jesinoski, National Adjutant of DAV, hereby cast one unanimous ballot for Daniel Contreras, for the office of National Commander. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: The Nominating Committee has nominated Coleman Nee for the office of national senior vice-commander. Are there further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) If there are no further nominations, I close the nominations and declare Coleman Nee elected as national senior vice-commander. (Applause)

The Nominating Committee has nominated John Donovan for the office of national first junior vice-commander. Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) If there are no further nominations, I will close the nominations and declare John Donovan elected as national first junior vice-commander. (Applause)

The Nominating Committee has nominated Cynthia Madison for the office of national second junior vice-commander. Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) If there are no further nominations, I will close the nominations and declare Cynthia Madison elected as national second junior vice-commander. (Applause)

The Nominating Committee has nominated James Procnier for the office of national third junior vice-commander. Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) If there are no further nominations, I close the nominations and declare James Procnier elected as national third junior vice-commander. (Applause)

The Nominating Committee has nominated Glen Hohman for the office of national fourth junior vice-commander. Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) If there are no further nominations I will close the nominations and declare Glen Hohman elected as national fourth junior vice-commander. (Applause)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: The Nominating Committee has elected Michael Dobmeier for the office of national judge advocate. Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) If there are no further nominations, I will close the nominations and declare Michael Dobmeier elected as national judge advocate. (Applause)

The Nominating Committee has nominated Debra Varner Dancer for the office of national chaplain. Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) Are there any further nominations? (One rap of gavel) If there are no further nominations, I close the nominations and declare Debra Varner Dancer elected as national chaplain. (Applause)

And I will now instruct the National Adjutant – sorry – to cast one unanimous ballot for all these offices.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: I, Barry Jesinoski, National Adjutant of DAV, cast one unanimous ballot for Coleman Nee, national senior vice-commander; John Donovan, national first junior vice-commander; Cynthia Madison, national second junior vice-commander;

James Procnier, national third junior vice-commander; and Glen Hohman, national fourth junior vice-commander; Michael Dobmeier, national judge advocate; and Debra Varner Dancer, national chaplain. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I would like to ask that the newly-elected officers and their spouses be escorted to the stage, please.

(Whereupon, the newly-elected officers and their spouses advanced to the stage to be seated.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: It is my great pleasure to now call on National Commander-elect Daniel Contreras for remarks. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the commander-elect advanced to the podium.)

COMMANDER-ELECT DANIEL CONTRERAS: Well, thank you for your applause but let me give you my applause to you. (Applause) This is an extreme and humbling honor to serve as your national commander. This is the culmination of a long journey that began in 1980 when I enlisted in the United States Army. (Cheers)

DAV's foremost commitment is to ensure promises are kept to those who sacrificed in service. The spirit that guides this sacred mission really begins when we are taught in basic training that we never leave our wounded behind.

We join the military, among other reasons, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. And we are stripped of our individualism and we enter into a culture of its own. We deny the self and put the unit first. We make mission accomplishment the order of the day. And we hold ourselves to a higher standard. And we do this to protect our fellow Americans and to honor the sacrifices of those who came before us.

But to me, the ultimate call has always been to care for others. And it's why I chose to be a medic. I wanted to be, as stated in our motto at the time, "All that I could be." And in my world that meant becoming an expert at my military occupation.

And I fought for the opportunity to take the expert field medical badge test. And I was heartbroken when I fell short and failed my first time around. If I hadn't, I wouldn't be here today because the adversity pushed me to perform on a whole other level.

And so the next time around, I was amongst 12 who graduated from a starting class of 500. I earned my expert field medical badge. (Applause) Thank you. But that was a lesson that was only fully realized when my training helped others to succeed on their journeys.

Having a capability, we are all taught, makes one person capable. Sharing a capability makes an entire organization better. (Applause)

The idea that we care for our own – that we help people and turn them into people who help others – that stayed with me. And when my Army career ended short of the 20-year goal I had set, I was blessed to find a job helping geriatric patients in civilian life. But I missed the structure and the culture that I'd left when I was in uniform.

At the same time, a fellow soldier, Jay Main, reached out to me to see if I needed help. And it reconnected me with the sense of camaraderie that I had missed. Not only was he looking after me, he felt there could be a new path in my life, that I could be of service to others under the banner of DAV. In that moment, I rediscovered a sense of purpose that I thought I'd lost.

We who are called to advocate and serve our fellows are given one of life's rare gifts. It provides us renewal. It's rehabilitative.

DAV provides meaning and comfort. It reconnects us with something bigger than ourselves, the very thing that drove us to serve.

And that was obvious on my first trip to Washington, D.C., when I witnessed DAV giving a voice to our deserving brothers and sisters who count on us for justice. DAV was and is a powerbroker for veterans. (Applause) Thank you. We are. No doubt.

From seeing our members meeting with lawmakers to witnessing commanders testifying over the better part of the last two decades, I've seen DAV's leadership in action throughout this journey. There is a singularity of purpose, a purity of focus, in our mission.

And we do not pontificate on national defense or ask people to share a single opinion about the wars that we are sent to fight. We simply ask that our fellow Americans uphold their promise that they made when we were called to serve.

But we don't persuade people to change their political beliefs. We simply appeal to our fellow citizens' better selves. And we remind them that the needs of their defenders, their veterans, should be one of the few things that we can all agree upon.

So serving that cause, one we all can agree upon, in fact, sacred, is something I'd have been happy to do at any level for the rest of my days. Service, that simple act of helping a veteran, family member, survivor, one-on-one, is one of the most rewarding things that we can do

And like many of you here, my passion for service was noticed in DAV. And I'm grateful for the confidence that so many have shown in my potential and for the mentorship some of my personal heroes have selflessly offered me along the way.

In 2008, after serving as a national area supervisor, I was asked to take on a new challenge in my home state of California. And as was once said by the great Yogi Berra, who put his baseball career on hold during World War II while he served in the U.S. Navy, "When you see a fork in the road, you take it." (Laughter)

The wealth of friendships that have blessed my life, particularly through my fellow DAV members, has been a godsend. And I need to thank many, many important people who have blessed my path.

First, thank you to my brothers and sisters at the DAV Department of California. You have lifted me up and have had my six along the way. Thank you so much for everything that you do. (Applause)

The opportunity to call leaders like Past National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster, George Steese, Ken Musselman, and many others, past and present, my personal friends is an incredible honor.

To be nominated for this high office by Delphine is a privilege that is only second to the opportunity to nominate her as the first woman to hold this post. (Applause)

I also must thank the great Enrique Ramos, who came into my life at a perfect time. Thank you, Enrique, for everything you do to make California even better. We appreciate you. (Applause) Enrique, he fights the good fight and is a blessing to our community amongst all of you in California. Thank you for being here to share in this moment.

The Department and chapter service officers in our state are amongst the best in all of DAV and serving alongside all of you has been a continuous inspiration for me.

And thank you Barry, Mark, Art, Cody, Randy, my fellow line officers, and the many PNCs who have set an incredible example through your leadership. And following in the footsteps of an amazing Latina like Nancy Espinosa is a daunting proposal. I can only hope the many lessons that I've learned from her example will help me through.

And I want to thank my family. My three brothers who all served, Ruben, my oldest, who is here, is the rock of our family. And he shared his home with me. Thank you for your support, your guidance. Giving back to my family, to honor their service, has always been a blessing. But, as families are, it's also been challenging at times. We all love each other deeply but we also give each other a hard time, especially brothers.

My brother David literally broke his neck in service. And 25 years after seeing him in a body cast during a grueling rehabilitation, I was finally in a position to help him receive the benefits that he earned.

Based on burr hole scars he received from being in a halo traction, we filed a claim to recognize his disfigurement. And the regulation stipulated that his wounds be "repugnant in nature" to be compensable. And, sadly, that part of my brother's claim was denied because his visible injuries weren't severe enough.

And, of course, I had to tease him. I told him that the VA said he was ugly before he joined the Navy and it was a pre-existing condition. (Laughter) But, then, as brothers do, he said, he told me I would never have made it in the Navy because they didn't have tennis courts on submarines and I was too soft for real service. (Laughter)

But my brothers and sisters have set an amazing example for me and will celebrate my victories and belabor my shortcomings with equal love and support. I want to thank all of my family members – my cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. It's going to be an honor to have them tonight sharing in this wonderful occasion we celebrate together as a family.

And, of course, my parents who loved us unconditionally and I know are smiling and celebrating from above.

I'm honored to have my son Robert here on this stage with me at this moment. He's the pride of my life. (Applause) He's given me four beautiful grandchildren. And seeing the man that he has become and the children he's raising reminds us all of the reasons why we sacrifice in service. (Applause)

And, finally, I want to thank my very best friend on earth and my partner on this journey. And as surely as I have served, in many ways my dear wife Teresa has done much, much more. (Applause) She's made all of this possible.

And not only has she been a friend to veterans through her work at the Department of Veterans Affairs, her love and support have made the many gifts I've enjoyed in this life possible. And, as many of you know, with grace and strength she's faced tremendous setbacks in her own health over the last several years since you first elected me to national office.

A lot can be said about someone's character based on the decisions that they make when life's moments, when they're uncertain about how much time they have left. While we've faced her diagnosis she's never wavered in her support along the way for me on this journey. It's our journey, baby.

And our DAV family has been there – (Applause) our DAV family has been there for every step of her illness. Thank you guys for all your warm wishes, your prayers. I know it makes a difference.

My love, as we celebrate this moment, (Choking up) know that this honor and opportunity is one I share with you. (Applause) Oh, I cry at AT&T commercials so, come on. (Laughter)

But my term of service as your national commander comes as our organization faces a great many challenges. The veteran population is decreasing and our needs are rising. The gains that we have made for so many through the PACT Act and our efficacy in a myriad of other areas gives us a foothold to build upon. But for those ill and dying from exposure, we have to fight to ensure they achieve justice for themselves, their survivors, before it's too late.

Our sisters in service are underserved and need to be welcomed into our organization with opportunities to lead and meaningful ways to add their voices to our cause. And I come from a state – yes. (Applause) I come from a state where five dozen women warriors participate in a resolution process and many more lead at every level.

Thank you for your special fight for justice. (Applause) This is an area where the momentum that we've seen from great leaders like Delphine, like Nancy, like Cynthia, and many others needs to build.

And even beyond those who served in uniforms, the caregivers who dedicate their lives to honoring the sacrifices of others need to know that DAV is there for them, as well. We need to give a voice to our hidden heroes and support them accordingly.

Too few know about DAV and too many leave service without a full understanding of the resources we make available to them.

The game that I threw the pitch in was back in 2007. I was throwing out the first pitch at a Dodgers game, just an incredible like bucket list in my life, and this was a while back, but I overheard a fan ask someone else, "What does DAV mean?" And of course, it doesn't mean "dudes against violence."

But though we've made great strides, we still need to work on the relationship that we have with our fellow citizens. We need, as DAV has done for more than 100 years, to make extending our services and engaging veterans and family members part of our daily lives. I look forward to working with all of you and thank you for your help in making our mission accessible to our fellow veterans.

And whether you're referring a friend or family member to DAV Caregiver Support or helping them connect with benefits or transportation or DAV Patriot Bootcamp, or making them aware of ways that they can give back, we all have an opportunity through DAV to serve. And connecting people with our resources is a service all by itself.

God bless all of you. And, again, I'm humbled and so thankful for this opportunity you've given me. Thank you for making DAV an outlet for your selfless sense of duty. Thank you for serving something bigger than yourselves.

Let's all unite in this upcoming year to wholeheartedly embrace community engagement, expand our membership, and proudly showcase DAV as the leading service organization in the nation – Disabled American Veterans. (Applause)

Together, together we can make a lasting impact and continue to serve our fellow veterans with unwavering dedication and compassion. Let's inspire others to join in our noble cause and together we can make a difference that echoes for generations to come. Thank you. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the commander-elect returned to his seat and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: I would like to call forward National Senior Vice-Commander-elect Coleman Nee for his remarks. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the senior vice-commander-elect advanced to the podium.)

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER-ELECT COLEMAN NEE: Thank you. Oh, thank you so much. I, from my military service, absolutely know that the job of a Number 2 is to be brief and be gone so I will attempt to that and meet my mission, commander. (Laughter)

First off, I just want to thank you, to all of you, for your faith and confidence in me. I know that when I represent this organization I personally represent all of you.

And I want to conduct myself in a way that will make you proud and make you assured that your message, your concerns, your challenges are articulately and succinctly presented, not only to our elected officials but to the general public and that your faith in me is something that I am absolutely completely humbled by and absolutely will work every day to ensure that your faith is not misplaced and that I continue to earn your respect and your trust.

I do want to thank and congratulate Commander Dan Contreras as well as all of my other line mates here. We have a great team. I want to thank Barry Jesinoski for his support and everything that he's done for me, personally, as well as Marc Burgess, in helping to mentor me in this organization.

I would be greatly remiss if I didn't tell you that I am so, as a father of a daughter, I am so inspired and hopeful and just pleased every day to know that there are fierce, strong, smart women veterans out there just like Nancy Espinosa who has done an outstanding job leading this organization. (Applause) Thank you, commander.

And just, finally, to all of my – I won't say it but all of my fellow members of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts department of DAV, thank you all. You are amazing. You are great people. I have had some incredible mentors, starting with Dan Stack, our former adjutant, our commander, Bob Bronson, our current adjutant Mike Vallia who works tirelessly every day for veterans, and somebody who couldn't be with us here today but for whom I have the most deepest appreciation for and immense respect and that's Past National Commander Alan Bowers.

Again, thank you so much for everything that you have provided for me. And I assure you, I do not take this responsibility lightly, nor will I ever shirk in my duty to continue to represent you in the way in which you should be represented and the way in which you deserve to be represented. Thank you very much. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the senior vice-commander-elect withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: National First Junior Vice-Commander-elect John Donovan. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the first junior vice-commander-elect advanced to the podium.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER-ELECT JOHN DONOVAN: I want to say thank you for the trust that you've put in me for the last few years and continue to do so. It's been an honor to serve with you along the way, with one exception when I was in Louisiana, but that's another story, one Paul will share with you. (Laughter)

We have a great mission. And it's one that has not been done by any other veterans' service organization and that is to take care of our veterans. We have a united voice and you will see that as the line comes up. We are together. We speak in one strong voice. So we need to continue that path.

Without us, our fellow veterans would be lost and we can't have that. We leave no one behind. And I want to work with you to continue that trend.

I want to thank the District 21, Arkansas and Oklahoma, for your continued support over the years. You've been great mentors and I appreciate that. And I would love to thank Commander for your advice on how to dress. (Laughter) Thank you so much.

Together we can do great things and I appreciate it. And, like Coleman says, be brief, be gone. Thank you so much. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the first junior vice-commander-elect withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: National Second Junior Vice-Commander-elect Cynthia Madison.

(Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the second junior vice-commander-elect advanced to the podium.)

SECOND JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER-ELECT CYNTHIA MADISON: I brought a cheat-sheet with me so I don't forget anyone. Hello, DAV.

(Response of "Hello.")

SECOND JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER-ELECT MADISON: I am very humbled to stand before you today. As you guys know, my last name is Madison – making a difference in serving our nation's veterans. But let's think about it. Each and every one of you every day makes a difference in serving our nation's veterans.

Whether you're lending an ear, you're taking a veteran to the hospital, or you're helping them with a claim, what are you doing? You're making a difference in serving our nation's veterans. And I give you a round of applause. (Applause)

To our incoming commander, I'm here to support you. We are going to make magic happen this year in making a difference in serving our nation's veterans. Today, again, we are going to make a difference in serving our nation's veterans. And we are going to make magic happen.

I need to thank my department. Without the department I would not be here. Thank you for your support. (Applause) Need to also thank my district. I thank you for your support. Also, I have to thank my chapter. Where would I be without my chapter? I thank you for your support.

Last, but not least, as I told you last year, I did not come up with "making a difference in serving our nation's veterans." My daughter came up with that and now she thinks that I am the child and she's the parent. (Laughter) Because she's always giving me direction. But she is pushing me to go forward.

As we go forward in 24-25, let's all make magic happen and make a difference in serving our nation's veterans. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the second junior vice-commander-elect withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: National Third Junior Vice-Commander-elect James Proconier. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the third junior vice-commander-elect advanced to the podium.)

THIRD JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER-ELECT JAMES PROCUNIER: Thank you, Nancy. First and foremost, Katie, thank you. That's my rock. To District 9 – (Applause) Give her a hand. She deserves it. She put up with me.

District 9, Department of North Carolina, Oslo County Chapter 16, I wouldn't be here without you. You're with me on this journey. Thank you. Commander Hunter, you have an amazing department.

None of us in this room or across this entire organization ever started out in life wanting to be a member of DAV. None of us ever wanted to be disabled. We wanted to be the best we could be and serve our country. But you know sometimes not getting what you want is a stroke of good luck. Because, despite our disabilities, we persevered, we found a new way to serve, a way to care for others, and a new purpose in our life.

What makes DAV unique among veteran nonprofits is that each and every one of us is a disabled veteran helping other disabled veterans. It's that understanding of what being disabled means that gives us the empathy to excel at helping others.

Commander, it has been an amazing year on the line with you. Barry, thank you for your wise guidance and counsel. To my fellow line members, I am so proud to be a part of a group of leaders as amazing as these gentlemen up here but even the fact that we have a Marine in here. We'll get him through it. (Laughter) And John and I being Navy chiefs we promise to write all our memos to you in crayon. (Laughter)

But thank you everyone out there. I promise that I will do everything I can within my power to make you proud of this organization and how I represent you out there. And I'm always as close as a phone call away.

I'm going to leave you today in the words of Jane Goodall who said, "Only if we understand can we care. Only if we care can we help." Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the third junior vice-commander-elect withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: National Fourth Junior Vice-Commander-elect Glenn Hohman. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the fourth junior vice-commander-elect advanced to the podium.)

FOURTH JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER-ELECT GLENN HOHMAN: Wow. I am both honored and humbled by this election. Thank you very much. The two most important disabled veterans in my life are my father, Glenn William Hohman, and my wife, Rexanna. Thank you. (Applause) I'm excited to join this incredible team of servant leaders and hope they show me the ropes well.

I want to thank my daughters, Gabriella and Grace for being here today. I love you girls.

And I want to thank the Department of Arizona and the rest of the district, Nevada and Hawaii, for all your amazing support along the way.

Thank you very much. I'm ready to get to work. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the fourth junior vice-commander-elect withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: National Judge Advocate-elect Michael Dobmeier. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the judge advocate-elect advanced to the podium.)

JUDGE ADVOCATE-ELECT MICHAEL E. DOBMEIER: Thank you, Commander, Nancy. First of all, most of you know my wife Sandy because she's a past national commander of the Auxiliary. But I can tell you how long she's known about DAV because we just celebrated our 49th wedding anniversary. (Applause) And she said if I'm a good boy I can be here for 50. (Laughter)

Thank you the 14th District, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Montana. You've been supporting me for 30 years up here. And I appreciate it.

Thank you Barry, Cody, Randy, the professional staff. They do most of the work. We just look good. (Laughter) Well, most of us look good. (Laughter)

But I appreciate the trust that you've put in me. The DAV has done more for me that I can ever give back but I won't stop trying. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the judge advocate-elect withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: National Chaplain-elect Debra Varner Dancer. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain-elect advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN-ELECT DEBRA VARNER DANCER: Well, I'm back. (Laughter) I just want to give thanks to our exiting – yes, that word – commander who has shown great leadership, who has exemplified, as my former line officer just stated, there are great women that sit among us.

And to Barry, I want to give him thanks and appreciation for being there for a listening ear when I had to email him or text him or call. You know, with caller ID a lot of people won't answer you. (Laughter) With email you get deleted "by mistake." (Laughter)

And to our incoming commander, Dan, I heard Deb call him "Hollywood" and I guess I've got to get in line and call him "Commander" now. (Laughter) I can't call him "Hollywood" anymore. And to all the line officers, my deepest gratitude, and especially to the Nominating Committee who thought enough of me to have me represent such a great organization.

And if you ever really get to know me, I don't choose words lightly. What I say, I mean. And when I speak, I live it. But to the best, greatest district, to the greatest MALT, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Tennessee, thank you. (Applause)

I was threatened so many times because I wasn't sure if I was going to come this way again and a man named Paul Herman, every time I looked – and I'm taller than he is. I can put a plate on top of his head (Laughter) – would always threaten me and didn't give me a choice.

And I said, "I don't know, Paul." He said, "Oh, yes, you're going. We've already voted." How are you already voting? We haven't had department convention yet? (Laughter) But it is humble. I'm truly grateful. I'm truly thankful.

For most of you who did not know, I want to thank my husband. I married 18 months ago. And this is something new to him. And even he tries to have a voice in it to tell me to go ahead, you can do it.

And many don't know I was only married two months before I accepted my first department convention last year and one of the adjutants came up to me and she said, "You're still on your honeymoon." I'm like, I didn't know it. (Laughter) She said, "You are."

And that's how important my dedication, my commitment. I read somewhere in the word of God that says, "Anything you put your hands to do, do it with all your might." So that's the mentality I carry. Yes, we've set aside things for important things but when it comes to working and serving, not only my vision but mankind as a whole, I believe in doing my best, walking in the spirit of integrity.

So when you see me one way and I turn the corner, I'm going to be that same way. I'm going to be just as pleasant as I can be, loving as I always am. And in spite of what people think, that I look mean, I'm unapproachable, she's not a nice lady – (Laughter) I tell folks, when you find out who I really am, don't share my secret. (Laughter) Let people think that I'm mean, I'm unapproachable, I'm unkind and that way I don't have to talk to everybody. (Laughter)

But I just want to tell you thank you. God bless you. We look forward to working and getting excited about this awesome work. God bless you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the chaplain-elect withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: At this time I will entertain a motion to discharge the Credentials Committee. Do I hear a motion? MR. KIRK JOHNSON: Mic 3.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 3.

MR. JOHNSON: Kirk Johnson, Chapter 85, District 16, I make the motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: May I have a second? (Laughter)

MR. TIM WALSH: Mic 1.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Mic 1.

MR. WALSH: Tim Walsh, Chapter 1, Department of South Dakota, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: All those in favor signify by saying aye; all opposed. So ordered. That just about concludes today's business.

National Adjutant Jesinoski, would you please read the list of newly-elected National Executive Committee members and share any other announcements.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT JESINOSKI: The following members have been elected to the National Executive Committee for the two-year term 2024 to 2026: District 2, Michael Martin; District 4, Mark Donberger; District 6, Nachee Miller;

District 8, Michael Harman; District 10, Ricky Barenbrugge; District 12, Al Reynolds; District 14, Scott Berndt; District 16, Michael Kerr; District 18, Don Brown; and District 20, Paul Shook. (Cheers)

Each session at this national convention has been closed captioned thanks to the generosity of Heroes with Hearing Loss. We are all truly grateful and appreciative of this support.

As a reminder to all National Executive Committee members, including those newly-elected, the Committee will meet immediately following adjournment of the convention, in just a few minutes, in North 120 D, Monroe Street side of the room.

Again, that's important that all of our NEC – that means those who have been NEC for a year and those newly-elected – that you all go across the street to the North Building 120 D as soon as possible after we finish this afternoon.

A swearing-in ceremony will be held at the NEC meeting. And our alternates should also attend the swearing-in ceremony, please.

Our Board of Directors will meet immediately following the NEC meeting.

The presentation of the national officers will begin at 6:30 this evening, right here in West 301 A-D, followed by dinner. As a reminder, only those who RSV'ed by the deadline on Sunday can attend. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium and gave three raps of the gavel.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, please stand for the retrieval of our colors. Color Guard, retrieve colors.

(Whereupon, the Department of Arizona Color Guard retrieved the colors.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Ladies and gentlemen, let's give our fellow veterans from the DAV Department of Arizona Color Guard a round of applause for their outstanding service. (Applause) Chaplain Varner Dancer, will you please lead us in a closing prayer.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN VARNER DANCER: Let us pray. Almighty Creator, once and again we truly, from the depths of our heart, give you thanks. We thank you once again for the spirit of unity, for the spirit of love and unifying our hearts and our work thoughts and our efforts and all of those that have participated in this great convention.

We ask for a double portion of blessing in our going in and coming out as we continue to support and lift up this great Disabled American Veteran organization, that we continue to be the leaders in teaching others on how to follow such an awesome example. These and all things that we ask and we receive by you. And the people said Amen.

(Response of "Amen;" whereupon, the chaplain withdrew from the stage and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER ESPINOSA: Thank you, Chaplain. The 102nd National Convention of Disabled American Veterans is now adjourned. (Applause) We will see you next year in Las Vegas. (Applause)

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned on August 6, 2024, at 2:35 o'clock, p.m.)

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**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY
101ST NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona

August 3, 2024

First Business Session

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The First Business Session of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary convened in Ballroom 120 D, North Building, of the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on Saturday afternoon, August 3, 2024, and was called to order at 2:05 o'clock, p.m., by National Adjutant Bunny Clos.

ADJUTANT BUNNY CLOS: I would like to go ahead and get started. We're going to call this meeting to order. Any side discussions, please take them outside. We are recording.

We are streaming so we don't want to have people not be able to hear and we need to be respectful of everybody sitting near us. So any outside conversations can be done outside.

Cell phones, please silence your cell phones.

Lynn, are you ready?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS LYNN HELMS PROSSER: Yes.

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms please present National Commander AnnMarie Hurley to the platform. Oh, I'm sorry. Wait. We're doing the pages first. My bad. I jumped the gun. (Laughter) I'm ready to get this show started.

All right, now National Sergeant-at-Arms, please present National Commander AnnMarie Hurley to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please see National Chaplain Aura-Lee Nicodemus is escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the chaplain was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please see that National Judge Advocate Paula Raymond is escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the judge advocate was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please see that National Fourth Junior Vice-Commander Carolyn Harris is escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the fourth junior vice-commander was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please see that National Third Junior Vice-Commander Kathleen Wenhe is escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the third junior vice-commander was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please see that National Second Junior Vice-Commander Terry Grabowski is escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the second junior vice-commander was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please see that National First Junior Vice-Commander Melissa Pierce is escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the first junior vice-commander was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please see that National Senior Vice-Commander – oh, my bad. I'm jumping the gun, again. National Sergeant-at-Arms please see that National Senior Vice-Commander Christopher Easley is escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the national senior vice-commander was escorted forward.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, have National Convention Chairman Hope Mulnix escorted to the platform. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the Convention Committee chairman was escorted to the platform.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, present and post the state Colors of Arizona.

(Whereupon, the state colors were presented and posted.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, present the National Colors.

(Whereupon, the National Colors were presented and posted.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, dismiss the Color Bearers.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HELMS PROSSER: Color Bearers, you are dismissed.

ADJUTANT CLOS: And we will now have prayer by National Chaplain Aura-Lee Nicodemus.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN AURA-LEE NICODEMUS: I'm pleased to tell you that last, yesterday when we had our NEC meeting we prayed for some little babies.

And Ohio's little baby that was born from their state commander's great-granddaughter was born yesterday. And she is over nine pounds and healthy at this time. She's doing well and mama is doing well. (Applause)

We also prayed for a little set of twins that they were expecting to take by c-section with the mom very ill. And the babies did not have to be born and mom is doing much better so it looks like they're going to a lot longer. (Applause) So our prayers were answered.

Please join me in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you today. We ask that you will help all of us to be kind to each other. Help us to forgive anything in the past that's troubled us.

Help us to be understanding of the needs of each other. And help us to be considerate at all times during this convention.

We ask a special blessing upon Diane Franz, our past national commander, as she is back in the hospital again. And we ask that you will be with her and care for her.

We ask a special blessing on Past National Commander Donna Adams as Donna faces a big surgery on the 8th of August. We ask that you keep her in your arms, surround her with your love, and provide her comfort and peace as she faces this large surgery.

We also pray for the family of John Adema from California. He passed away on July 23rd. He was a hundred years old. And he's the father of June McJunkin. He was also a World War II Marine.

We pray, also, for John Parker. He is still in the hospital. And we ask that you will be with him.

We pray for all of those that have been victimized by the recent natural disasters, from the floods in Vermont and New Hampshire to the fires and other natural disasters throughout the country. We ask that you will stand beside those people who have lost so much and be with each and every one of them.

We pray for our troops in harm's way. We ask that you will bless us throughout this meeting and help it to go as you see the best for us. In your name, Amen.

(Response of "Amen," after which the chaplain withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: We will now have Pledge of Allegiance led by National Americanism Chairman Kathleen Wenthe. She is having a little help from our junior members today. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the third junior vice-commander and National Americanism chairman advanced to the podium.)

UNIDENTIFIED JUNIOR MEMBERS: Free your hands.

UNIDENTIFIED JUNIOR MEMBERS: Stand at attention.

UNIDENTIFIED JUNIOR MEMBERS: Place your right hand over your heart or render the appropriate salute.

UNIDENTIFIED JUNIOR MEMBERS: And please join us for the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the third junior vice-commander and Americanism chairman and juniors led the Pledge of Allegiance. Whereupon, the juniors and the third junior vice-chairman and Americanism chairman withdrew and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: That was amazing. Thank you very much, juniors. (Applause) Please be seated.

"The Constitution and Bylaws of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary state that the supreme legislative powers of this organization shall be vested in the Annual National Convention composed of the National Officers and representatives of the state departments and units.

"In accordance with these directives I, Bunny Clos, National Auxiliary Adjutant, declare the 101st National Convention of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary be convened at Phoenix, Arizona.

"Consideration and disposition of business brought before this Convention shall be conducted in accordance with the National Constitution and Bylaws now in force. To all present, take due notice thereof and govern yourselves accordingly."

I would like to now introduce our little social butterfly, our beautiful and sophisticated National Commander AnnMarie Hurley. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander advanced to the podium.)

COMMANDER ANNAMARIE HURLEY: Wow, I could live with that. (Laughter) It is my privilege to welcome you to our 101st DAV Auxiliary National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. We hope that you take the time during this convention to rekindle old friendships and make new ones.

Your dedication to our organization is top-notch. And because of each of you, we have been able to assist veterans and their families for over 100 years.

Let's work hard this week to complete our business and have a little fun at the same time.

At this time I would like to introduce our 2024 National Convention Chairman Hope Mulnix for her official remarks.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the national convention chair advanced to the podium, amid a round of applause.)

MS. HOPE MULNIX: Commander, national officers, delegates, and guests, we'd like to welcome you all to Arizona. Hopefully, you've been doing well with our dry heat. (Laughter) All I have to say is, yes, it's going to be a warm one today.

Arizona is the only state that has one of the natural wonders of the world, which happens to be the Grand Canyon, which some of you learned about this morning in our joint session.

Arizona's Sonoran Desert is the only place on earth where the iconic Saguaro cactus grows. I'm sure many of you have seen them around. I know that Ann and Bunny took pictures with one of them. (Laughter)

We have the most days of sunshine per year, even more than Hawaii and Florida. All six states of New England plus the State of Pennsylvania would fit inside the State of Arizona.

There are more golf courses than in Scotland and more mountains than in Switzerland.

We have more boats per capita than any other state in the country, which you might find hard to believe since it's desert.

Phoenix is home of the Arizona Diamondbacks, Cardinals, the Phoenix Suns, the Phoenix Mercury, also Phoenix Rising and Arizona Rattlers. Those of you that don't know Phoenix Rising is our soccer team. And the Arizona Rattlers is our indoor football. So we used to have the Coyotes. We used to have all sports here but NFL moved to Utah.

Arizona is the only place in the U.S. that has U.S. mail delivered by mule and by boat because there is a spot in the Grand Canyon that they use the mule to deliver mail. There is a small little group of people that live there.

And one last thing, hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. And we really hope you enjoy the rest of the national convention. Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the national convention chair withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: I was surprised to hear that Scotland was beaten. My father was born in Scotland but he loved being an American.

Now it gives me great pleasure to introduce our past national commanders. Please stand when your name is called. Paula Raymond; (Applause) Linda Trulio; (Applause) Judy Steinhouse; (Applause)

Sandy Dobmeier; (Applause) Susan Henry; (Applause) Donna Adams; (Applause) Susan Miller; (Applause) LeeAnn Karg; (Applause) Ellen Timmerman; (Applause) and Lynn Helms Prosser. (Applause)

(Whereupon, as their names were called each past national commander stood or raised her hand and acknowledged the audience.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: I would like now to acknowledge the state delegates. Please stand if you are able and be recognized.

(Whereupon, the state delegates stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you.

I would like to call on Susan Henry, past national commander, to bring the greetings. Please step forward.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the past national commander advanced to the podium.)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SUSAN HENRY: Good afternoon.

(Response of "Good afternoon.")

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: Okay, people are awake. That's good. On behalf of the past national commanders, welcome to the national convention. You will see us. We have this little purple ribbon. Have questions? First timers ask us anything you want. We're happy to help.

On behalf of the past national commanders, AnnMarie, I have a gift for you.

(Whereupon, the commander was presented with her gift.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. May I open it?

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: Sure. Thanks for serving and having a great year.

(Whereupon, the commander opened her gift.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: See, I can't even open a box. Oh, here we go. I have to rip the paper and the box. Oh, look at that, DAV Auxiliary. It's beautiful. And it's got a frame to put it in. (Applause)

Oh, that's beautiful. Where did you go? (Laughter) There you are. You're like lightening. Thank you. That was very good. Very appreciated. Let me get my camera.

(Whereupon, the past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: If this is your first national convention, would you please stand and be recognized and we will all give them a huge round of applause.

(Whereupon, first-time attendees stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Stay standing because the pages and juniors will be passing out ribbons that we'd like you to proudly wear this week.

(Whereupon, all first-time attendees were given ribbons, after which they sat down.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: At this time I would like to recognize and, again, congratulate our DAV Auxiliary Outstanding Member of the Year Millie Mosley of Oklahoma.

(Whereupon, the member of the year stood and was recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you for all you do for veterans and their families.

I was with Millie but I didn't know her name and I didn't know until today that the lady I'd been talking to was the winner. (Laughter) So congratulations.

This is a good time to remind everyone to submit their Outstanding Member of the Year applications. There are many deserving candidates in every unit of this organization.

At this time I would like to excuse the Nominating Committee. They have work to do.

(Whereupon, the Nominating Committee withdrew from the ballroom.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Anyone making or seconding a motion must go to the microphone and loudly and clearly state their name, unit, and state department or they may not be recognized since our reporter hears this information through his headphones.

Will the Credentials Chairman Holly Mulnix please come forward to give a preliminary report of the Credentials Committee?

(Whereupon, the Convention Credentials Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN HOLLY MULNIX: Commander, national officers, delegates and guests, the Credential report is as follows.

This will be the – total units registered, 101; total departments registered, 28; national officers registered, 6; past national commanders registered, 8; total guests registered, 179; total delegates, 211; total alternates, 4; total registered, 408; and total vote count, 769.

Commander, I move that we accept the credentials report.

(Whereupon, the Convention Credentials Committee chairman withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. Do we have a motion to accept the preliminary report of the Credentials Committee? It's okay. May I have a second?

(Whereupon, a member seconded without a microphone.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: This one works. Madam Commander, Susan Henry, State Department of Tennessee, seconds.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. All in favor aye; all opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the Convention Credentials Committee chairman withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: The first order of business is the adoption of the National Convention Rules.

Printed copies of the Convention Rules have been furnished to all registered delegates. The chair will now entertain a motion for adoption of these rules.

MS. PATTY DAVIS: Patty Davis, Unit 19, Wisconsin, I second that motion.

(Whereupon, the motion was duly seconded from the floor, without a microphone.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: Susan Henry, State Department of Tennessee, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. The motion carried.

May I have a motion to accept the agenda subject to changes?

MS. ANN WILNER: I, Ann Wilner, South Carolina Unit 44, make a motion to accept the agenda subject to changes.

COMMANDER HURLEY: I need a second, please.

MS. DEBBERA McLAUGHLIN: Debbi McLaughlin, Unit 18, Florida, seconds it.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor aye; opposed. The motion carried.

I will now call on the Finance Committee Chairman Linda Applegate for the National Finance Committee report and the budget review.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Finance Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN LINDA APPLGATE: National Commander AnnMarie Hurley, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, family and friends, good afternoon.

(Response of "Good afternoon.")

FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN APPLGATE: The National Finance Committee meeting was held March 28th, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. via GoToMeeting online platform.

The voting members of the Committee present were AnnMarie Hurley, National Commander; Ann Wilner, District 9 NEC; Rose Williams, District 12 NEC; Kim Stake, District 21, NEC; and myself, Linda Applegate, District 4 NEC.

Those present without a vote were National Senior Vice-Commander Christopher Easley; National Adjutant Bunny Cios; and National Assistant Adjutant Ann Glende.

The purpose of the meeting was to set up and adopt a budget for the 2025 year.

At this time I would like to thank the Committee and the staff for all their help. The budget was included in your registration packets. And at this time I move for adoption of the budget.

(Whereupon, the Finance Committee chairman withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

MS. ANN WILNER: I, Ann Wilner, District 9, Unit 44, South Carolina, move to adopt the budget.

MS. DAVIS: Patty Davis, Unit 19, Wisconsin, I second that motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: I was busy trying not to cough so I had to get a cough drop from him over there so I could start talking again. Sorry about that. Motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the Finance Committee chairman withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: The national senior vice-commander will take over the chair now that he's helped me physically, too. (Laughter)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the senior vice-commander advanced to the podium.)

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER CHRISTOPHER EASLEY: Howdy.

(Response of "Hey.")

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER EASLEY: It is my distinct honor and pleasure to have our National Commander AnnMarie Hurley come give her national report. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the senior vice-commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. He's been a blessing. They all are. Okay. Thank you.

Dear DAV Auxiliary members, as I start writing this I am on a greyhound bus traveling from Georgia's State Convention to Alabama's. Next week I'll be in Texas. Sadly, that was stopped because of storms.

As always happens, this year has flown by. Very soon I will be out of office as our DAV Auxiliary national commander and I'm not even sure how I got here. And that's the absolute truth. (Laughter)

I've been blessed in so many ways. First with my parents, then my husbands – yes, two men who contributed to the person I am and the parents and grandparents we became.

I have three amazing daughters – Shannon, Kristen, and Margaret-Mary, and was lucky with two of the best grandchildren – Michael James and Madison Margaret. Anyone could have been proud of them.

Michael James died in a car accident while home on leave from the Navy, making my youngest daughter, Margaret-Mary, a Gold Star Mother. He was the quartermaster navigator on a destroyer at 19 years of age. His captain invited us to the ceremonies in memory of Michael on the destroyer.

Madison, my granddaughter, is a Gold Star granddaughter on her father's side. My brother, a retired Marine major, recently passed, had an impressive career, but to me he was simply the best brother in the world.

To add to our family's Gold Stars, I am a Gold Star wife.

As to the DAV and Auxiliary, early-on, with a new home, mortgage, two cars, three babies barely one, two and three years old, I needed a part-time job and was looking through want ads.

I have told this story before but I love it. It's how I became the person I am.

The phone rang. It was a man I'd worked with in the State House in Boston. His friend, DAV State Adjutant Joe Harold, needed a new department secretary.

I called Mr. Harold and asked when I should come in to interview. He said, "You start Tuesday and we'll see how it works out." (Laughter) Well, I was there almost 33 years so I guess it worked out very well. (Laughter)

After I retired, I didn't need to be at the head table at DAV state meetings any more but my husband, Michael, needed a ride to his meetings, the DAV. So I went to the Auxiliary ones and it's been a rollercoaster ever since.

After being state treasurer for four years, because of different circumstances with Auxiliary officers, I went – quote – through the chairs in two years, not four or five, and became the Massachusetts DAV Auxiliary state commander.

I was later encouraged to run for national office. Michael had died by then but I remembered he still thought I was crazy to go for state office, never mind national. What was he thinking up in heaven?

I don't know what he was thinking but I know he's been rooting for me since Day 1 because the unexpected – becoming DAV Auxiliary national commander did happen. And I definitely, without any question, am the luckiest gal alive. (Applause)

I have also been blessed with our Auxiliary leadership – first with Pat Kemper and now with Bunny Clos and Ann Glende, without whom I'd be lost. And there is absolutely no doubt about that.

All the states I have been to have been a joy to behold. Seeing DAV and Auxiliary members and families working together for the good of our disabled veterans and their families is a pleasure.

Your work and donations contribute to the good name of our DAV and Auxiliary. And I want to thank each and every one of you who has contributed, even the smallest amount, to benefit our disabled veterans through your donations, including time, clothing, games, anything they need are to be commended.

And I am giving you right now my eternal gratitude forever for this blessing I have had.

Thank you. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the senior vice-commander returned to the podium.)

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER EASLEY: Thank you, Commander Hurley. I will now entertain a motion to accept the national commander's report.

MS. CAROL PARKER-PARK: Carol Parker-Park, Unit 35, Ohio.

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER EASLEY: I have the motion made. I need a second. You need the microphone. Can someone get her the mic?

MS. JEAN SHIFFLETT: I'll second that, Jean Shifflett from the State of Massachusetts.

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER EASLEY: Thank you. We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? All in favor signify by saying aye; any opposed. The motion carried. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the senior vice-commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Excuse me. Now I will call on National Adjutant Bunny Clos for announcements. Where are –

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT ANN GLENDE: I'm going to do them.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Oh, okay. I'm like, okay, what else have I done wrong? (Laughter)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the assistant adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GLENDE: Good afternoon.

(Response of "Good afternoon.")

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GLENDE: Okay, just a few quick announcements. The Memorial Service will be tomorrow morning at 7:30. Business attire is appropriate if you are participating. For those involved please remember to check in with Bunny or myself at 7:00 a.m. outside of West 301 B-D, West Building, 300 Level. Excuse me.

We will also have the programs for those who volunteered to hand them out. Volunteers should be there no later than 7:00 a.m.

National chairmen, please pick up your respective committee folders tomorrow morning in the Auxiliary office which is in the West Building, Room 202. Please help us out and do not forget.

Convention Committee meetings convene tomorrow morning. If serving on a Committee, check your program schedule for rooms and times.

There will be no Auxiliary business sessions tomorrow so that you can participate in Convention Committee meetings and take advantage of the opportunity to attend DAV seminars. I highly suggest taking advantage of those seminars.

Forget-Me-Not Luncheon is at 12:30 on Monday. Tickets must be shown when entering the luncheon room. If you haven't done so already, ticket pickup will be in our office, Room 202, West Building, 200 Level.

We do have some available for sale so if you did not buy a ticket and you want to attend, please come to our office. They are \$55.

Registration badges will be needed to enter the National Commander's Reception, Fun Night, and the Introduction of National Officers and Dinner. All attendees must be registered in order to attend all events, including juniors.

To alleviate the need for attendees to pick up dinner tickets for Tuesday night, tickets will no longer be issued for dinner. Instead, an email will be sent by the morning of Tuesday, August 6th, to attendees who made a reservation noting their assigned table number with instructions regarding how to check in at the entrance to dinner.

If you are unsure of your email and need assistance, please visit the designated reservation table, which is on the lower level in the West Building.

Following the adjournment of this meeting, juniors, please seen Tammy Sigman, the National Junior Activities chairman. Tammy will you raise your hand?

(Whereupon, Ms. Sigman raised her hand.)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GLENDE: She is over there. For just a few short minutes.

Finally, we would like to congratulate the winners of the 2023-2024 membership incentives. The trip was Katie Convoy of Florida. (Applause) And she chose to attend national convention next year.

The black and white Stanley winners were Karen Bolton from Minnesota and Geri Rambin from Louisiana. (Applause)

The patriotic Stanley was Tammy Spicer from Kentucky. (Applause)

The \$50 gift card to the DAV store was Laurel – Melissa? – Laurel D. from Iowa. (Laughter and applause)

The unit pizza party was James D. Wessinger, Number 19, from South Carolina. (Applause)

And the state department pizza party was the State Department of South Dakota. (Applause)
Madam Commander.

(Whereupon, the assistant adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We will now have our closing prayer by the National Chaplain.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN NICODEMUS: Please join me in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for helping us to accomplish our work today so quickly and efficiently.

Help us to go forward and help us to serve while we are here, serving each other, serving members of our community, especially those that we see homeless upon the street.

We ask that you will help us to live our lives to leave a legacy behind.

We pray for our troops in harm's way. We pray for our family members who are at home and each of our DAV and Auxiliary members who were unable to be with us today. Be with each and every one as we go forward in your name. Amen.

(Response of "Amen," after which the chaplain withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: The Convention stands in recess and will reconvene at 9:00 a.m. Monday morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed at 2:45 o'clock, p.m., on Saturday, August 3, 2024.)

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**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY
101ST NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona

August 5, 2024

Second Business Session

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The Second Business Session of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary convened in Ballroom 120 D, North Building, of the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on Monday morning, August 5, 2024, and was called to order at 9:05 o'clock, a.m., by National Commander Ann Marie Hurley.

COMMANDER ANNMARIE HURLEY: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

COMMANDER HURLEY: Side discussions, cell phone and aisle obstruction reminder. Please be careful. Be quiet. Listen to everyone and let's get on with the job, okay?

I will now call this meeting to order. We will have a prayer by Aura-Lee Nicodemus our national chaplain.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN NICODEMUS: Please join me in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you with grateful hearts for all of the members that are here today. We pray for those members who are unable to be with us, those who are at home. Be with each and every one of them.

We pray for our troops in harm's way. We ask a special blessing today on PNC Donna Adams and Diane Franz as they battle their health issues. And we pray for complete healing for both.

We pray for the Adema family as they go through grieving the loss of their family member. Be beside each and every one of them.

We ask a special blessing on Michael Steinbeck as he faces serious health issues and his wife, Julie, as she cares for him while caring for her own health issues.

We pray for New Hampshire commander, Sharon's husband, Donald West, as he has his brain aneurysm surgery on August 14th. We ask that you will heal him.

And on John Parker. We pray for the little babies that we've been praying for for the last several days, that you will continue to heal them and help them to grow big and strong.

We pray for Shane Liermann as he recovers from his serious injuries.

We pray for those today who are in Hurricane Debbie's path. We know that many are experiencing serious flooding and many other issues with the wind. Be with each and every one.

We also pray for those with the natural disasters up north, that you care for them because each of those people are flooding and suffering so much loss.

We pray for New Mexico Department Adjutant Victoria Salazar as she battles an injury. We pray for complete recovery.

We also give thanks this morning for one of our new juniors who will be joining us soon in our ranks, for Baby (Inaudible) who came a bit early and was delivered by his grandma down in New Mexico. We give thanks for his survival. We give thanks that he's a healthy baby.

We also pray for the family of "Mean" Jean Jackson as they grieve her loss. She was a tremendous asset to the Auxiliary and we give thanks for all she did for all of us.

We ask a special blessing upon this meeting. Help us to be kind, considerate and caring of each other. In your name. Amen.

(Response of "Amen" after which the chaplain withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Please – excuse me. I have a "frog in my throat" but I've had it for a couple of days so I apologize. Please be seated. Will the credentials chairman – oh, I'm sorry. I forgot the pledge – hello. (Laughter)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the third junior vice-commander and Americanism chairman advanced to the podium.)

THIRD JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN KATHLEEN WENTHE: Free your hands. Stand at attention. Place your right hand over your heart or render the appropriate salute and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag.

(Whereupon, the third junior vice-commander and Americanism chairman led the Pledge of Allegiance, then the third junior vice-commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. Okay, now please be seated. Will the Credentials chairman please come forward to give an updated report on the Credentials Committee.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Convention Credentials Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN HOPE MULNIX: Good morning.
(Response of "Good morning.")

CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MULNIX: Commander, national officers, delegates and guests, the Credentials report is as follows: total units registered, 104; total departments registered, 28; national officers registered, 6; past national commanders registered, 8; total guests registered, 183; total delegates, 214; total alternates, 4; total registered, 415; total vote count, 782.

Commander, may I move that we accept the Credentials report.

(Whereupon, the Convention Credentials Committee chairman withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Is there a second?

MS. SHIELA KROLL: Sheila Kroll, Unit 16, Florida, I second.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the Convention Credentials Committee chairman withdrew from the stage.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Again, I'm sorry. The Constitution and Bylaw Committee chairman will now come forward. For the purpose of saving time, she will read only the amendment number and the purpose or rationale.

For the second reading she will read the entire proposed amendment. The first reading of the Constitution and Bylaws, Judy Steinhouse. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the constitution and bylaws chairman and past national commander advanced to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JUDITH STEINHOUSE: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 1. Page N-14, Article II, National Officers, Section 3, Eligibility for National Office, Third Paragraph.

Rationale: To agree with the 2023 delegate-approved amendment allowing National Executive Committee members to serve as state commanders. Reference, Page N-20, Article V, National Committees and Chairmen, Section 1, National Executive Committee, Fourth Paragraph.

Paragraph was not previously amended due to an oversight. Additionally, allows an immediate past national commander to serve as a state commander as they have no other conflicting duties as the NEC member limitation has been removed.

Number 2. Page N-28, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, A. Life Membership, Third Paragraph, replace with the following paragraph.

Rationale: In order to maintain the viability of the declining life membership fund and distributions to state departments and units an increase from \$250 to \$300 in the amount of life memberships is necessary. This also clarifies that life membership fee increases only apply in new life members, and does not change the amount due for existing life members.

Number 3. Page N-28, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, A. Life Membership, Paragraph 4, add a comma after "upon attaining the age of 80" on the second line.

Rationale: Housekeeping issue to be grammatically correct.

Number 4. Page N-29, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, C. Junior Membership, Second Paragraph, insert "a parent or legal guardian has signed the application and" as indicated below.

Rationale: Compliance with federal and state regulations established to protect the rights and privacy of minor children.

Number 5. Page N-30, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, C. Junior Membership, Fourth Paragraph, first sentence, insert "with parental or legal guardian consent and signature".

Rationale: Compliance with federal and state regulations established to protect the rights and privacy of minor children and to maintain the viability of a declining life membership.

This also clarifies that life membership fee increases only apply to new life members and does not change the amount due for existing life members.

Number 6. Page N-30, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, C. Junior Membership, Seventh Paragraph, insert only after completing a junior – excuse me – “only after completing a junior charter consent form with parental and/or legal guardian signatures”.

Rationale: Compliance with federal and state regulations established to protect the rights and privacy of minor children.

Page S-5, Article III, State Officers, Section 3, Eligibility for State Office, Third Paragraph.

Rationale: To agree with the 2023 delegate-approved amendment allowing National Executive Committee members to serve as state commanders. Reference Page N-20, Article V, National Committees and Chairmen, Section 1, National Executive Committee, Fourth Paragraph.

Paragraph was not previously amended due to an oversight. Additionally, allows an immediate past national commander to serve as a state commander as they have no other conflicting duties as the NEC member limitation has been removed.

Number 8. Page S-8, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, c. Delete “two copies”.

Rationale: Employing the use of scanners and electronic communications has eliminated the need for additional copies.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGAGE: Judy. Judy.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: No. No. Number 9. Page S-8, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, d. Delete “two copies”.

Rationale: Employing the use of scanners and electronic communications has eliminated the need for additional copies.

Number 10. Page S-9, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, add a new paragraph under e. to read.

Rationale: To ensure the timely submission of necessary documents in order to maintain the state department’s good standing and to prevent penalization.

Number 11. Page S-9, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, reverse the order of the last two paragraphs to read.

Rationale: Realignment separates the financial report and the IRS Form 990 paragraph from the post-convention duties.

Number 12. Page U-1, Article IV, Executive Board, Section 1, replace Section 1 and add a Section 2 as follows.

Rationale: This brings all information regarding the composition and duties of a unit executive board into a single location and adds a condition to ensure the executive board is composed of an odd number of members when there is a vacancy in the immediate past commander’s position.

(Whereupon, the constitution and bylaws chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: At this time I will be providing the Education Program report. I got confused because I didn’t have it.

For those wishing to make donations, oh yes, for our national programs, they will be accepted upon completion of the Education Program report.

It is my privilege to provide you with the annual DAV Auxiliary Education report on behalf of Immediate Past National Commander Darlene Spence.

This year DAV Auxiliary had 76 students apply for a scholarship. It was a record year for applicants. Of those, 17 received a scholarship.

A committee of three judges, applications blindly, looked at them blindly, all identifying information is removed by national headquarters before being received by the Committee.

They are numbered in the order received and at no point is the Committee aware of whom an application belongs to.

Thirteen students received the maximum allotted amount of \$2,500. Three students received \$2,200. And one student, who was part-time, received \$750. The total amount distributed was \$39,850.

Selected students are required to submit proof of enrollment to national headquarters no later than September 2nd, 2024.

Payments are made directly to the university or college.

We'd like to thank all the individuals who applied and encourage those who did not receive a scholarship this year to apply again next year.

Per our guidelines, a student may receive up to five scholarships.

I'd also like to report on the Vocational Training Assistance Program. As you are aware, this program provides up to \$500 to ill or injured disabled veterans, their spouse or children attending a course to improve their workplace skill or career development.

Those wishing to apply should complete an application and include the necessary requirements for pre-approval. The application will be reviewed by the DAV Auxiliary Education Program Committee.

If approved, applicants will receive notification of the amount granted and what information will be required within 60 days of course completion in order to receive reimbursement.

This program has not taken off as well as we had hoped as we only have provided \$1,500 in assistance since the inception in 2021.

Many who apply are not eligible because they are attending college or universities for higher education.

Please be sure to share this important program with your members and the community. There is much potential and we need to get the word out there to our members. Thank you.

At this time – for those planning to present donations – oh, yes – make sure your checks are signed and that state and unit checks have two signatures.

Form a line in the center aisle and one-by-one you can present your donation. Announce your name, state, and/or unit, and the donation amount at the microphone and step forward. Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good morning. On behalf of the 12th NEC Rose Williams and Patty Davis, we'd like to present a check for \$50 to DAVA for Kids. (Applause)

MS. TAMMY SIGMAN: Hello, I'm Tammy Sigman, State Department of Ohio commander. And we would like to present a check for \$350 to the Scholarship Fund and \$350 to the Family Assistance Program. (Applause)

MS. AUNDRA JACKSON: Good morning. My name is Aundra Jackson for the Department of Kentucky and I am the commander. And we would like to present \$50 to the Education Program. (Applause)

MS. JO HARVEY: Hello, my name is Jo Harvey, commander of Unit 109, Titusville, Florida. And I'd like to present a check for National Disaster Relief in the amount of \$2,000; DAV for Kids, DAVA for Kids for \$2,000; Family Assistance Program, \$2,000; and Mid-Winter Games, \$1,000. (Applause)

MS. KATHY CLAMPITT: Hi, I'm Kathy Clampitt, Department of Oregon commander and I'd like to present a check for \$100 to the DAVA for Kids and \$100 for the Caregivers. (Applause)

MS. ASHLEY TEMPS: Good morning. I am Ashley Temps, Missouri State Department commander. I have three checks. We'd like to donate \$100 to the Education Scholarship Fund; \$100 to the Service Support Fund; and \$100 to Winter Sports. (Applause)

MS. AMIE RABER: Good morning. I'm Amie Raber, Manatee County Unit 18 Florida. I have \$1,000 for the National Disaster Program and \$1,000 for the National Caregivers Program. (Applause)

MS. BARBARA FISHER: Hello. My name is Barbara Fisher. I'm from Indiana 23. I would like to give \$20 from the State of Indiana and \$20 in honor of my Unit 23 and for the Service Fund. (Applause)

MS. KIM STAKE: Kim Stake, District 21 NEC. The State Department of Arkansas has a check for \$100 for the Education Scholarship and \$200 for the Service Support Fund. (Applause)

MS. ANN WILNER: Ann Wilner from the State of South Carolina. I'm the adjutant. We have \$100 for the Education Program fund, \$100 for the Caregiver Program fund, \$100 for Camp Corral, and \$100 for DAVA for Kids. (Applause)

MS. LIZ BUTTERS: Liz Butters, Department of Massachusetts commander. We are donating \$100 to the National Education Scholarship Fund and \$110 to the National Service Program. (Applause)

MS. PAULA BORRAZAS: Paula Borrazas, State of New Hampshire, judge advocate. We have donations: \$50 for the Family Assistance Program and \$50 for the Education Fund. (Applause)

MS. LOLA MOSES: Lola Moses, DAV Department of Georgia Auxiliary commander, and I have a check here for the National Fall Conference donation of \$100 with others to be recorded at the Fall Conference. (Applause)

MS. KAREN WENDT: Karen Wendt from the State of Illinois, commander. I have from the Department of Illinois \$250 for DAV for Kids in memory of Carla Raymond or Reynolds, and from the Egyptian Gateway District in Illinois DAV for Kids, also in memory of Carla Reynolds. (Applause)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SUSAN HENRY: Susan Henry, past national commander and former recipient of the Educational Loan Fund, I have \$100 for the Scholarship Program. (Applause)

MS. TERRY KORNEGAY: Terry Kornegay, state commander, Department of Florida. I have \$500 for the National Service Program. (Applause)

MS. MARY ELLEN BELL: Mary Ellen Bell, past state commander of Texas, current judge advocate, have a check for the DAVA General Fund for \$750 and (Inaudible). (Applause)

MS. ELAINE PHILLIPS: Elaine Phillips from the State of Texas. I'm the state commander. And I have a check from the State of Texas to the DAVA Caregivers Program for \$750. (Applause)

MS. JANET PRATT: Good morning. I'm Janet Pratt and I'm from the State of Massachusetts, Unit 29. On behalf of the NECs I am making a donation for DAV for Kids for \$200. (Applause)

MS. CAROL PARKER-PARK: Good morning. Carol Parker-Park, Unit 35, Ohio. I am contributing \$100 to the Caregivers Program, which is near and dear to my heart. (Applause)

MS. JACQUE DuBOSE: Jacque DuBose, senior vice-commander, Department of Maryland, Unit 13, on behalf of Francina Garry, our senior – I'm sorry, our commander for Department of Maryland and myself \$100 to the Educational Scholarship Fund. (Applause)

CHAPLAIN NICODEMUS: Aura-Lee Nicodemus, Unit – Byron Morris Unit 3 from Vermont. I have a personal donation for \$100 with gratitude for the Education Program and what it does for our kids. My granddaughter will be graduating Saturday with a double doctorate because of this program. (Applause)

MS. JACKSON: I had to come back. From the Department of Kentucky, we also have a check for the Service Program for \$50. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the adjutant advanced to the microphone.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: AnnMarie, just stand over there. (Laughter) Let me save you a few steps. When called upon, the convention committee chairman will approach the podium and announce the winners.

I ask the committee advisors to step to the awards table to the right – sorry, we changed it up so it will be to the left – of the podium for award presentation and photo ops.

As winners are announced, please step forward to the awards table to receive the awards. If needed, please form a line.

The chairmen will not read the committee members names individually but, rather, have members stand to be recognized.

We will start with Americanism and the advisor was Kathleen Wenthe.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the Americanism Convention Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KIMBERLY KNOWLTON: National commander, national adjutant, national officers, past national commanders, delegates and guests of the 101ST National Auxiliary Convention.

The National Americanism Convention Committee met in the West 101 A-B at 9:00 o'clock on August 4th, 2024. Our advisor was Kathleen Wenthe. I, Kimberly Knowlton, served as Committee chairman and Barbara McComb was elected secretary.

The following units were judged to be the best in their category for the National Americanism Awards. Group 1, 10 to 50 members, Pikeville, Kentucky, Unit 134.

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award, followed by a round of applause.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KNOWLTON: Group 2, 51 to 100 members, Glasgow, Kentucky, Unit 20. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award, followed by a round of applause.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KNOWLTON: Group 3, 101 to 200 members, Jack Riddell, Louisiana, Unit 20. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award, followed by a round of applause.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KNOWLTON: Group Number 4, 201 members or over, Cactus, Arizona, Unit 2. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KNOWLTON: The Special Americanism awards: Group 1, 10 to 200 members, Park Rapids, Minnesota, Unit 38. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KNOWLTON: Group 2, 201 members or over, Summerville, Massachusetts, Unit 27. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KNOWLTON: The Committee submitted the following recommendations. Check your autocorrect. "Auxiliary" was spelled wrong a lot.

The print that people are using is too fine. Use a little bit larger font, if possible.

Put the date of the program and describe the program, not how it's implemented.

Will the members who served on this committee please stand, if able, to be recognized.
(Whereupon, the committee members stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

AMERICANISM CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KNOWLTON: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Americanism Convention Committee chairman withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: Community Service. And just to let you all know, you all can be as excited and loud as you want when your unit wins. (Cheers) So let's have some excitement. I thought I was going to be the only one and nobody was following me so I was like, I'll just let you all know.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the Community Service Convention Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SANDRA DOBMEIER: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DOBMEIER: National commander, national adjutant, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, and guests of the 101ST National Auxiliary Convention.

The National Community Service Convention Committee met in Room 106 B at 9:00 o'clock 8/4/24. Our advisor was Carolyn Harris. And I, Sandy Dobmeier, served as Committee chairman and Rose Williams was elected as secretary.

The following units were judged to be the best in their category for the National Community Service awards.

Group 1, 10 to 50 members, Scott Vetter (Inaudible) Unit 33, Massachusetts. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DOBMEIER: Group Number 2, 51 to 100 members Michael J. Thomas Unit 5, North Carolina. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DOBMEIER: Group 3, 100 to 200 members Victoria County Unit 169, Texas. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DOBMEIER: And Group 4, 201 members and over, Titusville, Unit 109, Florida. (Applause) Congratulations to all of you.

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DOBMEIER: The Committee submitted the following recommendations.

Community Service is a program that had probably more changes several years ago already than many of the other programs and one of the big things is that it has to be, your donations have to be for veterans or their families.

We found many things on the reports that were for not veterans or their families. Those things do not count. You do not donate to those things.

You need to attach the explanation if over \$1,000 total. We had reports that had over \$10,000 but they didn't attach the attachment. Your report is thrown out. There were several of those. So make sure you put your attachment on there.

And itemize in detail the category with the amount, what it was for, not just the name, you know part of it. Make sure you describe it, that it was a veteran's whatever. You know?

And nursing homes, schools, churches, youth programs, those do not qualify under the Community Service program. Your donations have to be for veterans or their families and your programs for that, as well.

Make sure that all donations follow the DAV guidelines and they have to be for the veterans. So as a Community Service report is given at Fall Conference, as information is given out, be sure you get it back to your units so they understand it.

And when you are judging your state reports, make sure you go through those state reports, especially on Community Service, so that they can learn something that, you know, they may not be aware of.

So congratulations to all the winners and I'd like all the Committee members for the Community Service to please stand up and be recognized.

(Whereupon, the Committee members stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DOBMEIER: Thank you all for helping out with this.

(Whereupon, the Community Service Convention Committee chairman withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: We will now do Junior Activities. And with Aria coming up I just want to say it is her birthday today so happy birthday Aria. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the Junior Activities Convention Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are we going to sing?

(Whereupon, the membership sang "Happy Birthday" to Aria.)

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ARIA TAYLOR: Oh, my gosh. Thank you all. That was so nice and pretty. I'm trying not to cry. Okay. (Laughter)

All right. So, good morning, everybody.

(Response of "Good morning.")

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: All right. National commander, national adjutant, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, and guests of this 101st National Auxiliary Convention.

The National Junior Activities Convention Committee met in the 101 C West Building at 9:00 a.m. on August 4th, 2024. Our advisor was Tammy Sigman. And I, Aria Taylor – the birthday girl – served as Committee chairman and Janice Felder-Chapman was elected and appointed our secretary.

The following units were judged to be the best in their category for the National Junior Activities Award.

Group 1, 1 through 25 members, Unit 3, Heart of Texas, Waco, Texas. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Group 2, 26 through 50 members, Unit 20, Jack Riddell, Louisiana. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Group 3, 51 through 100 members, we did not have any category in that, any members or any submissions for that one so make sure we do next year

Group 4, 101 and over, there was no submissions in that one, either so we got to get there, guys.

Junior Activity Books, again, we had none. So we've got to get going.

National Junior Award, 15 through 17, Bryson W. Davis, Heart of Texas, Unit 3. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: National Junior Award, 11 through 14, Gavin Boyd, Milwaukee, Unit 19. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: National Junior Award, 7 through 10, Alicia Ann Miller, looks like Iron River, Wisconsin. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Congratulations. The Committee submitted the following recommendations.

So there were three. On the Junior Activities Report, 1, to move the city and state category to be included with the name and the unit and the unit number.

Let's see, Change Number 2 should be on Line Number 2, the number of juniors, the charter and the participants should be on another line.

And Change Number 3, a point system including for units reporting the total number of hours to report because a lot of us, honestly, didn't put or add up the total amount of hours that you honestly did on the bottom of the report.

So will the members who served on this Committee please stand, if able, to be recognized.

(Whereupon, the members of the Committee stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Thank you, ladies. We had a great time and thanks, again, for all of my birthday wishes. I appreciate it. We're going to have fun tonight at the Fun Night. (Laughter and Applause)

(Whereupon, the Junior Activities chairman withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: Legislative.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the Legislative Convention Committee chairman advanced to a microphone.)

LEGISLATIVE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAROL PARKER-PARK: Good morning. (Response of "Good morning.")

LEGISLATIVE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PARKER-PARK: National commander, national adjutant, national officers, past national commanders, delegates and guests of the 101st National Auxiliary Convention.

The National Legislative Convention Committee met in 102 B West at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 4th, 2024. Our advisor was Terry Grabowski. (Applause)

I, Carol Parker-Park, served as the Committee chairman. And Danny Pierce was elected and appointed secretary.

The following units – thank you. And I am standing. (Laughter) The following units were judged to be the best in their category for the National Legislative awards.

Craven County Unit 40, New Bern, North Carolina, for 10 to 50 members. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

LEGISLATIVE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PARKER-PARK: Group 2, 51 to 100 members, Russell Golob, Unit 3, Hibbing, Minnesota. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

LEGISLATIVE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PARKER-PARK: Excellent. Group 3, 101 to 200 members, Marshfield Memorial 35, Marshfield, Massachusetts. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

LEGISLATIVE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PARKER-PARK: Group 4, 201 members or over, Danny Bruce Unit 23, Michigan City, Indiana. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

LEGISLATIVE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PARKER-PARK: The Committee submitted the following recommendations.

Follow guidelines. Don't make your own forms. (Laughter) There were some.

And take out Line 3 with totals as it is already listed, period. If photocopy, please make sure it is page size and clear. We had some that were pretty fuzzy.

Will the members who served on this Committee please stand, if able, to be recognized.

(Whereupon, the Committee members stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

LEGISLATIVE CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PARKER-PARK: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Legislative Convention Committee chairman withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: I hear you. Thank you. We will now do Mae Holmes. Be as loud as you want. I love it. I love the energy.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the Mae Holmes Convention Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

MAE HOLMES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAROLINE MORRIS: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

MAE HOLMES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORRIS: Commander, past national commanders, national officers, delegates and guests. This is the Mae Holmes.

Group 1, 10 to 50 members, A.G. Tri-Centennial Unit 84 from Crestwood, Illinois. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

MAE HOLMES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORRIS: Group 2, 51 to 100 members, Michael J. Thomas Unit 5, Broadway, North Carolina. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

MAE HOLMES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORRIS: Group 3, 101 to 200 members, Millington Unit Number 116 from Mumfordsville, Tennessee. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

MAE HOLMES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORRIS: Group 4, 200 members plus, Elizabeth Towne Number 003, Kentucky. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

MAE HOLMES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORRIS: There were no recommendations.

Will the members of the Committee please stand and be recognized for all their hard work.

(Whereupon, the Committee members stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

MAE HOLMES CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORRIS: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Mae Holmes Convention Committee chairman withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: VAVS.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the VAVS Convention Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

VAVS CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DEBORAH ADEMA: National commander, national adjutant, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, and guests of this 101st National Auxiliary Convention.

The National VAVS Convention Committee met in the Room 105 A and B at 9:00 a.m. on August 4th, 2024. Our advisor was Patty Davis. I, Deborah Adema, served as Committee chairman and Hannah McCauley was elected and appointed the secretary.

The following units were judged to be the best in their category for the National VAVS awards.

Group 1, 10 to 50 members, Kathleen Earley, was Craven County Number 40, North Carolina. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

VAVS CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ADEMA: Group 2, 51 to 100 members, Vi Hoffman, was Brookings DAVA Number 22, South Dakota. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

VAVS CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ADEMA: Group 3, 101 to 200 members, Bea Hogan, was Milwaukee Number 19, Wisconsin. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

VAVS CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ADEMA: And Group 4, 201 members or over, National Headquarters, Wescott Houghton Number 56, Massachusetts. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

VAVS CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ADEMA: The Committee submitted the following recommendations.

Please be more specific on itemized section and where it was donated.

List the hours for putting the items together and itemize those.

And write more legibly or please use the fillable form and type it. (Laughter)

Will the members who served on this Committee please stand, if able, to be recognized.

(Whereupon, the Committee members stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

VAVS CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ADEMA: Thank you. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the VAVS Convention Committee chairman withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: Last but not least, Membership. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the first junior vice-commander and National Membership Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MELISSA L. PIERCE: Good morning, everyone.

(Response "Good morning.")

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: So winners for Auxiliary membership awards, Group 1, 10 to 50, largest member increase of 13 went to Alabama Twin Rivers Number 102. (Applause)

Oh, you guys have to come up. (Laughter) I thought it was just expected and they were just going to come, but. I'll be over there shortly if you want my picture. (Laughter)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: Group 2, 51 to 100, largest member increase, 32, New York, Monroe Powers Number 15. Whoo. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: Group 3, 101 to 200 members, largest member increase of 73, Oklahoma Pittsburgh County Number 20. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: And in Group 4, 201 members plus, largest member increase of 160, Florida Venice Golf Number 101. Whoo. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: Group 5, department with the largest percent increase of 113.32 percent goes to the great State of Louisiana. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: Group 6, department, largest numerical increase of 210 members goes to the great State of Florida. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: And then our new unit with the most new members of 16, Skyline Number 30, Waynesboro, Virginia. (Applause)

(Whereupon, a representative came forward to accept the award.)

FIRST JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIERCE: Thanks, everyone, for all your hard work this year. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the first junior vice-commander and National Membership Committee chairman withdrew from the podium and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: I'd like to challenge all the states to beat Florida next year. (Laughter) Yes, they do. Maybe we will at Fall Conference. Well, come to Fall Conference. We'll help you out with that, too.

We have to wait for AnnMarie now as she's getting her picture taken. I don't have jokes and I'm not a good joke teller. Chris was doing that the other day. It wasn't very good so I've got to take it from him. (Laughter)

No, but, seriously, great job recruiting this year. And let's aim to beat all those numbers next year. We really need our members. We really need you all to help with that. (Applause) So we really depend on you.

We did make national quota so we are happy about that. And several states did make quota so way to work. Let's continue that this year. (Applause)

Please do not look at the screen. (Laughter) Deter your way that way.

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER EASLEY: That is artificial intelligence at its finest, people. (Laughter)

ADJUTANT CLOS: Ignore the screen. I'm just going to keep on talking until it's gone. Is it gone? (Response of "Yes.")

ADJUTANT CLOS: Okay. I was going to say, I could try singing a song but – (Laughter)

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Delegates will now caucus to discuss the proposed bylaw amendments. You will have ten minutes.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed to caucus, at 9:59 o'clock, a.m.; and the meeting reconvened at 10:15 o'clock, a.m. on Monday, August 5, 2024.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: Thank you. If everyone could start taking your seats we've given about 15 minutes so we would like to go ahead and get started.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the senior vice-commander advanced to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: The Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman will come forward, please, for the second reading of the proposed Constitution and Bylaw amendments.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws chairman and past national commander advanced to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Are we all ready? Here we go. I will read it in its entirety. I will move to pass it and then we will need a second before we can discuss any of it.

So, Number 1. Page N-14, Article II, National Officers, Section 3, Eligibility for National Office, Third Paragraph now reads:

"Elected national officers, the immediate past national commander, and National Executive Committee members shall not be eligible to serve simultaneously as the commander of any state department." Amend by deleting "the immediate past national commander and National Executive Committee members."

The paragraph will then read:

"Elected national officers shall not be eligible to serve simultaneously as the commander of any state department."

Rationale: To agree with the 2023 delegate-approved amendment allowing National Executive Committee members to serve as state commanders. Reference, Page N-20, Article V, National Committees and Chairmen, Section 1, National Executive Committee, Fourth Paragraph.

Paragraph was not previously amended due to an oversight. Additionally, allows an immediate past national commander to serve as a state commander as they have no other conflicting duties as the NEC member limitation has been removed.

Madam Commander, I ask for, I ask for – I ask for this amendment to be approved.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

CHAPLAIN NICODEMUS: Aura-Lee Nicodemus, Byron Morris Unit 3, I second that.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; any opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 2. Page N-28, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, A, Life Membership, Third Paragraph, replace with the following paragraph:

“A life membership may be secured on a payment plan and shall continue only as long as there are sufficient funds to make annual distributions. Life membership fee shall be \$300 for Ages 18 through or dash 79. Age 80 and over shall be complimentary. Minimum down payment is \$20 unless otherwise specified. Birth date must be indicated on the membership application. The balance of any existing life membership account shall not be affected by life membership fee increases.”

Rationale: In order to maintain the viability of the declining life membership fund and distributions to state departments and units an increase from \$250 to \$300 in the amount of life membership is necessary. This also clarifies that life membership fee increases only apply to new life members and does not change the amount due for existing life members.

An additional fact that needs to be included here is that we look to have this effective January 1st of 2025.

Madam Commander, I ask that this motion or paragraph or amendment be approved.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. ASHLEY TEMPS: Madam Commander, Ashley Temps, Missouri, District 15, I second this motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 3. Page N-28, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, A, Life Membership, Paragraph 4, add a comma after “upon attaining the age of 80” on the second line.

Rationale: Housekeeping issue to be grammatically correct.

Madam Commander, I move for the passage of this amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. BONNIE PETERSON: Bonnie Peterson, Unit 33, Wisconsin, I make a second.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 4. Page N-29, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, C, Junior Membership, Second Paragraph, insert “a parent or legal guardian has signed the application and” as indicated below. Paragraph will then read:

“New junior and junior life membership applications shall be processed upon receipt at national headquarters only if a parent or legal guardian has signed the application and a date of birth is provided.”

Rationale: Compliance with federal and state regulations established to protect the rights and privacy of minor children.

Madam Commander, I move for the passage of this amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. AMY BOWSER: Madam Commander, I second that. Amy Bowser, Unit 48, Virginia.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE:

Number 5. Page N-30, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, C, Junior Membership, Fourth Paragraph, first sentence, insert "with parental of legal guardian consent and signature". The sentence will then read:

"A junior life membership may be secured on a payment plan with parental or legal guardian consent and signature through Age 18, at which time if said life membership is not paid in full, the membership shall continue as long as there are sufficient funds to make annual distribution.

"Said life membership fees shall be equivalent to the current life membership at Age 18. The minimum down payment to start the life membership is \$20 unless otherwise specified."

Rationale: Compliance with federal and state regulations established to protect the rights and privacy of minor children and to maintain the viability of a declining life membership.

This also clarifies that life membership fee increases only apply to new life members and does not change the amount due for existing life members.

And this is also true for juniors so if we make a \$20 down payment on the junior this will not, if you make that today, it will not be changed because we're changing the \$300. It will stay at the \$250. Okay?

Madam Commander, I request the approval of this amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. DEBBERA McLAUGHLIN: Debbie McLaughlin, Unit 18, Florida, seconds it.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion?

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SUSAN HENRY: Susan Henry, past national commander, I make a motion that we amend this Bylaw change by inserting between the word "signature" and the comma the phrase "for each payment".

And the rationale for this is the way the federal law is written each payment must contain the parental signature.

So if you start a membership with \$20 down with that signature, even though the signature is on the application it is required with every additional payment. So the grandparent can't pay that off without that parental signature every time.

And so this will clarify that it is due, that signature is required with each payment in order to keep us in compliance with the federal law. A question over here.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Is there a second?

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PAULA RAYMOND: Past National Commander Paula Raymond, seconds.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: I have a question.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: The second should have been done before she went into her explanation is what the issue is.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: We do have a second. We're in discussion on this.

MS. KIMBERLY OLINGER: I have a question, also.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Apparently that's the discussion on the first amendment.

MS. OLINGER: Okay, under where it says "sentence will read" it says "through the age of 18" so that would make it 19. It should read "attain the age of 18".

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: That would be a second amendment.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Judy –

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: State your name and unit number.

MS. OLINGER: I'm sorry. It's Kimberly Olinger, Unit Number 2, Michigan, District 10.

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER EASLEY: Okay, on the amendment, Chris Easley, national senior vice-commander, we're on the amendment where you said, "parental signature" if they do the auto-payment for a junior, they don't need to do the parental signature, is that correct?

Or for our juniors because of the parental signature does something have to physically be sent to national for every payment? Bunny. I just wanted that clarification.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Currently, we can't do auto-payments for juniors because of this issue. I-T will be working on it; however, it's going to take a little while so that's not even an issue as of right now.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: On your proposed amendment change –

MS. OLINGER: Yes, ma'am.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: If we said through Age 17 that would cover it?

MS. OLINGER: Correct.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Okay.

MS. OLINGER: Through Age 17 would correct that or attain the age of 18.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Well, that's through Age 17, then.

MS. OLINGER: Correct.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Yes. It is – the membership year that you change to 18 but through 17 would take care of that. Did we have a second on that?

ADJUTANT CLOS: Let me elaborate a little bit on that, too. Now, with the new membership system, if you are 17 today, you're going to turn 18 tomorrow, tomorrow you will be a part-life member.

So if there is no money paid you will be inactive. If you do have money paid, you will be an active part-life member the day after you turn 18 years old.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Not yet. Go ahead.

MS. OLINGER: So I will make a motion that 18 needs to be changed to 17 so then it reads "through the age of 17".

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Through age 17?

MS. OLINGER: Correct.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Okay. Okay, now you need a second for that one.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Is there a second?

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER DONNA ADAMS: PNC Donna Adams, I second that motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried. (Applause)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: The amendment to the amendment has carried.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Right. Okay, we've taken care of Age 17 amendment now back to Susan's amendment to include after the word "signature" and between the word "signature" and the comma to add "for each payment". Now that's the one we have to discuss now.

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. HOLLY MULNIX: Madam Commander, I second that motion, Holly Mulnix, East Valley Unit 8, Arizona.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Now – yes. Yes, I was just going to – now with all the amendments to this amendment, it will now read:

"A junior life membership may be secured on a payment plan with parental or legal guardian consent and signature for each payment through Age 17 at which time if said life membership is not paid in full the membership shall continue only as long as there are sufficient funds to make annual distribution.

"Said life membership fee shall be equivalent to the current life membership at Age 18. The minimum down payment to start the life membership is \$20 unless otherwise specified."

Madam Commander, I ask for the approval of the amended –

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HENRY: The original motion stands, we're just voting.

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion, do we have a second?

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: It's been seconded.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Okay. All in favor; any opposed now. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: We're rolling right along to Number 6. Page N-30, Article VII, Membership, Section 6, Membership Classification, C. Junior Membership, Seventh Paragraph, insert "only after completing a junior charter consent form with parental and/or legal guardian signatures". The paragraph would then read:

"Junior groups of ten (10) or more members may be granted a junior charter upon application to national headquarters only after completing a junior charter consent form with parental and/or legal guardian signatures."

Rationale: Compliance with federal and state regulations established to protect the rights and privacy of minor children.

Madam Commander, I move for the adoption of this amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. MARY ELLEN BELL: I second that motion, Mary Ellen Bell, Unit 42, Texas.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Okay. Is there any discussion? (Murmuring) We have lots of discussion.

SECOND JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER TERRY GRABOWSKI: Hi, Terry Grabowski, second junior vice, I have a question on that. What happens to the existing charters?

(Answered off microphone.)

SECOND JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER GRABOWSKI: Thank you.

COMMANDER HURLEY: All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 7. Page S-5, Article III, State Officers, Section 3, Eligibility for State Office, Third Paragraph now reads:

"Elected national officers, the immediate past national commander, and National Executive Committee members shall not be eligible to serve simultaneously as state commander."

Amend by deleting "the immediate past national commander" and "National Executive Committee members". Paragraph will then read:

"Elected national officers shall not be eligible to serve simultaneously as state commander."

Rationale: To agree with the 2023 delegate-approved amendment allowing National Executive Committee members to serve as state commanders. Reference Page N-20, Article V, National Committees and Chairmen, Section 1, National Executive Committee, Fourth Paragraph.

Paragraph was not previously amended due to an oversight. Additionally, allows an immediate past national commander to serve as a state commander as they have no other conflicting duties as the NEC member limitation has been removed.

Madam Commander, I ask for the adoption of this amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MR. JOHN OLINGER: John Olinger, District 10, Michigan, Unit 2, I make the motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 8. Page S-8, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, c. Delete "two copies". The sentence will then read, "Supplement to state bylaws."

Rationale: Employing the use of scanners and electronic communications has eliminated the need for additional copies.

Madam Commander, I move for the adoption of this proposed amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MR. BRANDON MOTT: Brandon Mott, Unit 15 from New York, and I second this.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion?

MS. ANN WILNER: Madam Commander, we need to fix – Ann Wilner, Unit 44, South Carolina. We need to change, also, on S-19 and S-20, pages, we need to change from “two copies” to “a copy” in all three places in that section, A, B, and note.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: You’re absolutely correct.

MS. WILNER: Why thank you, Ms. Steinhouse. (Laughter)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: We did miss that so, yes, we do have to probably – we need to change those for the same reason, because it does say “two copies” there and it should be down to “a copy”.

MS. WILNER: I make a motion to amend.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Do I have a second on the amendment?

MR. MOTT: Brandon Mott, Unit 15 New York and I second that motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. All in favor; any opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Okay, now we need to go back and work on the original amendment which has already been moved and seconded.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Okay, we have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second – a motion has been made and seconded. Is there any more discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 9. Page S-8, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, d. Delete “two copies”. The sentence will then read: “d. Adopted amendments to the state standing rules.”

Rationale: Employing the use of scanners and electronic communication has eliminated the need for additional copies.

Madam Commander, I ask for the passage of this amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

CHAPLAIN NICODEMUS: Aura-Lee Nicodemus, Byron Morris Unit 3, Vermont, I second that motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 10. Page S-9, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, add a new paragraph under e. to read:

“The state adjutant shall comply with the request(s) of the national headquarters or national judge advocate in order to achieve final approval of the state standing rules and supplement to state bylaws. Said request(s) shall be addressed and remitted to national headquarters within fourteen (14) days of national judge advocate notification.”

Rationale: To ensure the timely submission of necessary documents in order to maintain the state department’s good standing and to prevent penalization.

Madam Commander, I vote for the adoption of this proposed amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. ASHLEY TEMPS: Madam Commander, Ashley Temps, Missouri Unit 2, I second the motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 11. Page S-9, Article IV, Duties of State Officers, Section 6, State Adjutant, reverse the order of the last two paragraphs to read:

“The state adjutant shall also be responsible for sending to national headquarters within five (5) days after the close of state convention the winning program reports, by category, judged at state convention.

“A copy of the financial report for the previous fiscal year and a copy of the appropriate IRS Form 990 shall be forwarded to national headquarters no later than September 30th.”

Rationale: Realignment separates the financial report and the IRS Form 990 paragraph from the post-convention duties.

Madam Commander, I move for the adoption of this proposed amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MS. HOLLY MULNIX: Madam Commander, I second that, Holly Mulnix, East Valley Unit 8, Arizona.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; any opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: Number 12. Page U-1, Article IV, Executive Board, Section 1, replace Section 1 and add a Section 2 as follows:

“Section 1. If a unit desires to have an executive board, it shall be composed of the commander, senior vice-commander, junior vice-commander, treasurer, immediate past commander, and the elected executive board members or their alternates. A majority shall constitute a quorum.

“Units with fifty (50) life members or less shall elect two (2) executive board members from the floor. Units with more than fifty (50) life members shall elect four (4) executive board members from the floor. If there is not an immediate past commander, an additional executive board member shall be elected from the floor.

“Section 2. This board shall transact the business of the Auxiliary between meetings of the Unit and make recommendations; provided, however, that none of its actions conflict with any actions taken by the unit. The minutes of all executive board meetings must be read at the next regular meeting of the unit for approval by the unit.”

Rationale: This brings all information regarding the composition and duties of a unit executive board into a single location and adds a condition to ensure the executive board is composed of an odd number of members when there is a vacancy in the immediate past commander's position.

If approved, Articles XII, Duties of Unit Executive Board on Pages U-9 and U-10 will be deleted. All remaining articles throughout the standard local unit bylaws will be renumbered.

Madam Commander, I request the adoption of this amendment.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept this Bylaw change. Is there a second?

MR. OLINGER: Madam Commander, John Olinger, Unit 2, I second.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; opposed. The motion carried.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander returned to the podium.)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE: I would like to thank the Committee that served with, served on this Constitution and Bylaws Committee. If you are in the room and available and can do so, would you please stand and receive the recognition you are due.

(Whereupon, the Committee members stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: I want to thank Judy and commend her for the incredibly good job she did getting through all this. God bless you. (Applause)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS CHAIRMAN AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER STEINHOUSE:
Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chairman and past national commander withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a few announcements. Oh, I'm so sorry. I almost forgot my boss. (Laughter) National Adjutant Bunny Clos will make some announcements. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: She's the boss. If you have not picked up your Forget-me-not Luncheon tickets, please see Ann or myself following this meeting.

The luncheon is literally going to be held right behind the black curtain so for those who will be going, go out the doors and then go in the doors in the back so we can make sure we keep count of everyone and who is supposed to be there. It will start at 12:30 so make sure that you are arriving on time.

Districts will caucus immediately following this meeting to discuss the report of the Nominating Committee so right when we dismiss you will gather back with your groups so you can caucus.

National officers and NECs will not have reserved seating at the Forget-me-not Luncheon. You are welcome to sit with your states. PNCs will have a reserved table near the front of the room. No one will be escorted in.

Registration badges will be needed to enter Fun Night tonight and the Introduction of Officers tomorrow night. All attendees must be registered in order to attend the events.

To alleviate the need for attendees to pick up dinner tickets, tickets will no longer be issued. You will get an email in the morning. I am hoping that everybody did – if you have questions talk to the desk down around the "Will Call" area to make sure that the email was correct. So you can look for that no later than tomorrow morning. That will be the entrance into the dinner tomorrow night.

That's all I got. (Applause)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LeeAnn KARG: Bunny, Past National Commander LeeAnn Karg from Minnesota, Unit 37, question on that. Some of us are having phone troubles and our emails are not coming in until several hours later.

ADJUTANT CLOS: You will have to check with the table. I don't know.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KARG: Okay.

ADJUTANT CLOS: I don't know what the process is. This is a new process this year.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KARG: Okay.

ADJUTANT CLOS: And I was not involved with that. So if you can maybe touch base with that desk, whoever is there, if nobody is there, maybe go to registration area.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KARG: Okay.

ADJUTANT CLOS: And we can find out the answer there.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KARG: Okay.

ADJUTANT CLOS: I will actually send a text message, too, to see if I can find that out before you guys leave the room.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KARG: Great. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bunny, in answer to LeeAnn, just in case, I was having that issue. I'm staying at the Sheraton and you have to go into their special Marriott WiFi to be able to get your emails. You can't just do it the other way.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Once I did that, then I started receiving my emails appropriately.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So I don't know if you're with the Sheraton or not but that's – go to Marriott WiFi dot com.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Thank you, Regina.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bunny, quickly, I have some people that had plane issues and got in yesterday so they weren't able to get their tickets for the luncheon.

ADJUTANT CLOS: I'm actually going to call those people probably up right now. Carolyn Adams, Lenora Boykins, Hattie McLaughlin, Zenia McLaughlin-Williams, Mary Jane Martinez, and Kathy McCoy, we have your tickets. Come get them.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bunny, Carolyn Adams is not here.

ADJUTANT CLOS: I'm sorry?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Carolyn Adams is not here. She is back in the hospital, from Unit 20.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Okay.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: There being no further business, we will now have our closing prayer by the chaplain. Please stand.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN NICODEMUS: Please join me in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you thankful that the business of this meeting has been accomplished. We ask that as we go forward you will bless us as we enjoy the friendship of our Forget-me-not Luncheon.

We give thanks for our officers at all levels and all their dedication and commitment to serve us for this past year.

We ask a special blessing upon Judy Hezlep, our past national adjutant, from Ohio 63, as she recuperates.

We ask a special blessing on Frances Devine, better known to us as "Cookie" as she recovers from her food poisoning here at convention.

And we also ask a special blessing upon Carolyn Adams that was taken to the hospital. We ask that you will provide healing to her so that she can be with us for our next meeting.

We ask your blessing upon our members who are at home. Be with each and every one and our family, especially those in harm's way. In your name. Amen.

(Response of "Amen", after which the chaplain withdrew from and the adjutant returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: I just want to take one quick little moment. I have to tell you how amazing Bunny Clos and Ann Glende are and have been to me, not just this year but all through my way up. And God bless them both. I'd be lost without them. (Standing Ovation)

The convention stands in recess and will reconvene at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 10:50 o'clock, a.m., on Monday, August 5, 2024.)

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**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY
101ST NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona

August 6, 2024

Final Business Session

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The Final Business Session of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary convened in Ballroom 120 D, North Building, of the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on Tuesday morning, August 6, 2024, and was called to order at 9:01 o'clock, a.m., by National Commander AnnMarie Hurley.

COMMANDER ANNMARIE HURLEY: I will now – excuse me. Here we go again. I will now call this meeting to order. Side discussions, please, none of them. Cell phones, turned off. And an aisle obstruction reminder to be careful so people can get through.

This meeting is now come to order and the prayer will be by Aura-Lee Nicodemus, our national chaplain.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the chaplain advanced to the podium.)

CHAPLAIN AURA-LEE NICODEMUS: The first thing I have is Donna Adams asked me, we extend her thanks to everyone for the cards, well wishes and all the positive thoughts that we've sent her so far on her journey to recovery.

She also shared today that one of our prayers from Fall Conference was answered in that – and she's very relieved – that her oldest son, who has had cancer and had a stem cell transplant when we were at Fall Conference, is now in remission and doing well. (Applause)

Please join me in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you to ask for prayers for so many of our members. This morning we say a special prayer for Laurie Stopyra who is reunited with her husband who is now very seriously ill and in the hospital. We ask that you will bless both of them.

We ask for prayer for Joey Heath who had an unfortunate event during his dialysis yesterday and we pray for he and his grandmother as she goes through this with him as he's seriously ill.

We ask a special blessing on Past National Commander Diane Franz and Donna Adams, that you will care for them in their journey to wellness.

We pray for Judy Hezlep this morning, John Parker, Francis Devine, and Carolyn Adams and John Parker.

We also pray for the babies from the from the Pollock and Santos family, that you will continue to protect them and help them to grow big and strong.

We pray for those in the harms of Diane. Be with each and every one of our friends in Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia today as this storm wreaks havoc in that area.

We also pray for those, the victims of floods up north and those from the wildfires. Be with our members and care for each and every one of them.

We pray for our members that are at home. We pray that you will heal them so they can be with us next year.

We ask that you will care for our troops in harm's way. We pray for the leaders of our nation and we ask that you will bless this meeting. Help us to make wise decisions. Help us to be thoughtful, caring, understanding, and help us to listen to each other with careful attentiveness. In your name. Amen.

(Response of "Amen," whereupon, the chaplain withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Will the credentials – I'm very sorry. The Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the third junior vice-commander and Americanism chairman advanced to the podium.)

THIRD JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER AND AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN KATHLEEN WENTHE: Free your hands. Stand at attention. Place your hand on your heart or render the appropriate salute and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the third junior vice-commander and Americanism chairman led the pledge of allegiance, after which she withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Will the Credential chairman please come forward to give an updated report.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Convention Credentials Committee chairman advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT BUNNY CLOS: Please be seated. (Laughter)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Oh, I am so sorry. But they should have figured it out themselves, anyway. (Laughter) Go ahead.

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN HOLLY MULNIX: Good morning.

(Response of "Good morning.")

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MULNIX: Commander, national officers, delegates and guests. This will be the final reading of credentials report and it is as follows: total units registered, 104; total departments registered, 28; national officers registered, 6; past national commanders registered, 8; total guests registered, 186; total delegates, 215; total alternates, 4; total registered, 419; total vote count, 782.

Commander, I move that we accept the credentials report.

(Whereupon, the Convention Credentials chairman withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: We have a motion to accept the preliminary report of the Credentials Committee.

MS. KIM STAKE: Kim Stake, District 21, I second the motion.

COMMANDER HURLEY: A motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor; any opposed. The motion carried.

The National Adjutant will now call the roll of the newly-elected National Executive Committee members and alternates. As your name is called please come forward for the purpose of installation.

(Whereupon, the Adjutant advanced to and the commander withdrew from the podium. The newly-elected National Executive Committee members and alternates advanced to the front of the room as the national adjutant called their names.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: District 1, Janet Pratt. Sorry, I only have to do the bolded names. District 2, Josephine Rivera; District 4, Linda Applegate; District 6, Jacque DuBose;

District 8, Donald Harris; District 10, Kimberly Olinger; District 12, Karen Eccles; District 14, Nancy Berndt; District 16, Joel Adema; District 18, Holly Mulnix; District 20, Sharon Thornton.

Oh, my gosh. I'm so sorry. I've got to call the alternates, too. I'm sorry. I'm trying to keep us both intact here.

District 2, Brandon Mott; there is nobody for Number 4; District 6, Amy Bowser; District 8, Linda Steadman; District 10, Anissa Rader; District 12, Evelyn Couture;

District 14, LeeAnn Karg; District 16, Deborah Adema; District 18, Jonnie Clairday; District 20, Elaine Moreland. We are also going to include District 19, Frederick White; and District 13, Arthur Frauendorfer.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: You are requested to remain silent during the ceremony of installation.

The fact that you have been selected by the members of this Auxiliary for your respective offices shows that they have confidence in your ability and that they feel assured you will strictly and impartially discharge all duties incumbent upon you.

They confide the welfare of this Auxiliary to your keeping and they are expected at all times to respect your position. Let their confidence, therefore, be fully justified by your fidelity.

Let us all remember gratefully the heroism of our veterans whose names we proudly bear. Realizing fully these responsibilities, are you willing to assume the obligations of your office?

(Response of "I am.")

COMMANDER HURLEY: Members, please stand. Please place your right hand over your heart, pronounce your name and repeat after me the obligation of your respective office.

"I, AnnMarie Hurley, having been selected as an officer of this Auxiliary, do most solely pledge myself to faithfully and impartially perform in letter and in spirit all duties of the office I am about to enter.

"I promise to obey the lawful orders of my superior officers, and exact the obedience of others thereto to the best of my ability and means.

"When my successor has been duly selected and installed, I promise to surrender all property of the organization in my possession, all of which I now affirm."

You may now lower your hands. And the members may be seated.

Members of this Auxiliary, I now present to you the officers of your choice. (Applause) I trust you will aid them in the performance of their duties. With your help their term of office will be highly successful. Congratulations, all. (Applause)

Will the chairman of the Nominating Committee please come forward to give the Committee report.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the Nominating Committee chairman advanced to the podium to give the report.)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FRANCIS KENNEDY: The Nominating Committee of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary held their first meeting on 8/3/2024. We are pleased to submit the following slate for your consideration to serve as the 2024 and 2025 officers:

National Commander, Christopher Easley; (Applause) Senior Vice-Commander Melissa Pierce; (Applause) First Junior Vice-Commander Kathleen Wenthe; (Applause) Second Junior Vice-Commander Terry Grabowski – yes, that will work; (Applause)

Third Junior Vice-Commander Carolyn Harris; (Applause) Fourth Junior Vice-Commander Jane Casher; (Applause) Judge Advocate, Past National Commander Paula Raymond. (Applause)

The secretary who served on this Committee was Liz Bitters, District 1. (Applause) And the advisor was Lynn Prosser, past national commander. (Applause) I'm Francis Kennedy, District 5 and first time ever being on a committee, national or otherwise. (Applause) But I've been a member of the Disabled American Veterans since 1991. (Applause)

Would the members of each district who served on this Committee please stand to be recognized, if you are able. And thank you, because we worked hard. They worked very hard.

(Whereupon, the Committee members stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KENNEDY: It was my pleasure being in the room with the Committee. I think we did an excellent job.

Commander, that's the Nominating Committee's report. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Nominating Committee chairman withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you very much. Appreciate it. When two or more candidates are nominated for any one office, roll call shall continue until completed unless a candidate withdraws. The person receiving the majority of the roll call votes shall be elected.

I wish to thank the members of the Nominating Committee for their time and effort. I am now discharging the Nominating Committee and all other convention committees.

I now ask all the officers to please leave the podium and go to your respective districts for the purpose of nomination and election. NECs, please join your districts, as well.

(Whereupon, the officers and NECs withdrew to their respective districts.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: I will now appoint three tellers. Please come to table in front of the room: Erin O'Brien, Ashley Temps, Kimberly Knowlton.

(Whereupon, the tellers advanced to the table.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: You have heard the report on the committee on nominations. Christopher Easley has been nominated by the Committee for the office of National Commander.

MS. MARY BERGERON: Madam Commander, I would like to give a seconding speech for Christopher Easley.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you.

MS. BERGERON: Madam Commander, national adjutant, national line officers, past national commanders, delegates, members, and guests.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Are there any other nominations? No, I wait?

MS. BERGERON: Christopher Easley is eligible for membership, for Auxiliary membership through his grandparents, numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins, myself, his mom, and is most proud to be eligible through his step-father, C.J.

Chris, while growing up in the organization has only been a member since 2005, when males were allowed to join. He served in all unit offices in Texas Alamo Unit Number 5, junior vice and adjutant treasurer in Units 32 and 43 in Oklahoma.

In Texas he served all elected state offices with the exception of treasurer and judge advocate. He is currently the State Department of Oklahoma judge advocate.

He was elected and then appointed national chaplain. He served as alternate NEC and NEC for District 20, served on the National Finance Committee, and was the chairman his second year.

He has served on the National Interim Constitution and Bylaws Committee. He has held the national office position of national second junior vice, national first junior vice, and national senior vice.

It is my honor to second the nomination of my son, Christopher James Easley. Mary Bergeron, District 20, Alamo Unit Number 5, Texas. (Applause)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, I declare the nomination closed for the office of national commander. All those in favor of Christopher Easley for the office of

national commander signify by saying aye; those opposed. They ayes have it. Christopher has been elected to the office of national commander. (Applause)

Melissa Pierce has been nominated by the Committee for the office of national senior vice-commander. Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, I declare the nominations closed for the national senior vice-commander.

All those in favor of Melissa Pierce for the office of national senior vice-commander signify by saying aye; those opposed. The ayes have it. Congratulations. (Applause) Melissa has been elected to the office of national senior vice-commander.

Kathleen Wenthe has been nominated by the Committee for the office of national first junior vice-commander. Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, I declare the nominations closed for the office of national first junior vice-commander.

All those in favor of Kathleen Wenthe for the office of national first junior vice-commander signify by saying aye; those opposed. The ayes have it. Kathleen Wenthe has been elected to the office of national first junior vice-commander. (Applause)

Terry Grabowski has been nominated by the Committee for the office of national second junior vice-commander. (Applause) Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, I declare the nominations closed for the office of national second junior vice-commander.

All those in favor of Terry Grabowski for the office of national second junior vice-commander signify by saying aye; those opposed. The ayes have it. Terry Grabowski has been elected to the office of national second junior vice-commander. (Applause)

Carolyn Harris has been nominated by the Committee for the office of national third junior vice-commander. Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, I declare the nominations closed for the office of national third junior vice-commander.

All those in favor of Carolyn Harris for the office of national third junior vice-commander signify by saying aye; opposed. The ayes have it and Carolyn Harris has been elected to the office of national third junior vice-commander. (Applause)

Jane Casher has been nominated by the Committee for the office of national fourth junior vice-commander. Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, I declare the nominations closed for the office of national fourth junior vice-commander.

All those in favor of Jane Casher for the office of national fourth junior vice-commander signify by saying aye; any opposed. They ayes have it and Jane Casher has been elected to the office of national fourth junior vice-commander. And congratulations, all. (Applause)

Now, Paula Raymond has been nominated by the Committee for the office of national judge advocate. Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, I declare the nominations closed for the office of national judge advocate.

All those in favor of Paula Raymond for the office of national judge advocate signify by saying aye; any opposed. The ayes have it and Paula Raymond has been selected to the office of national judge advocate again. God bless her. (Applause)

So our new officers are: National Commander Christopher Easley; Senior Vice-Commander Melissa Pierce; First Junior Vice-Commander Kathleen Wenthe; Second Junior Vice-Commander Terry Grabowski;

Third Junior Vice-Commander Carolyn Harris; Fourth Junior Vice-Commander Jane Casher; and Judge Advocate Paula Raymond. Congratulations, all. (Applause) I will now dismiss the tellers and thank them for their work.

(Whereupon, the tellers returned to their seats.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Will the current national officers please return to your seats at the head table.

(Whereupon, the national officers returned to their stations.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: The election having been completed, I ask now the national sergeant-at-arms to come forward for the purpose of acknowledging those members who served as convention pages.

MS. MARY ANN JENSEN: Hi, my name is Mary Ann Jensen, commander of South Carolina Auxiliary. I just have a question for future knowledge. So in order to run for an office you do not have to be present at the nominations or anything. Is that correct?

ADJUTANT CLOS: This typically doesn't happen. I've been coming to conventions for 14 years. The only other time I know it has happened was well before my time so all I know that it's happened twice.

Do we want this to be an every-year occurrence? We do not. We do not. With that being said, Jane Casher, who was elected did submit a letter of intent along with valid information as to the reason why she could not be in attendance.

So is this something that we want to happen? Absolutely not. Moving forward would we have a guideline if it was to happen? We will. However, this is not what we want to happen. We want you in attendance.

But, again, this has happened twice that I know of and that was after talking with Pat Kemper as well who was here for almost 40 years. So do we want it to be an occurrence? No, absolutely not.

MS. JENSEN: I think many people feel the same way, that, you know, if something is important enough for you to do, then unless you're on your deathbed, then you need to be present for that.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Thank you.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SUSAN MILLER: I just have one question. Susan Miller, past national commander, can you tell us what district and what state she's from because I don't know her, personally.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Jane Casher is from Kentucky. She is District 13. And she does amazing things for veterans and their families. Actually, she was – the reason why she was not here is because she was receiving a Hall of Fame for a veterans' organization.

So, again, it was a last-minute thing. And we will have a guideline moving forward but this is not an occurrence that we want to see happen. So that will be addressed. Okay?

MS. KIMBERLY OLINGER: I have a question, also. Kim Olinger, Unit Number 2, District 10, Michigan. How would this person be installed? They are not here to be installed.

ADJUTANT CLOS: At the pre-NEC meeting at Fall Conference.

MS. OLINGER: Okay, so in the meantime between – because our current officers take their position at their installation, correct?

ADJUTANT CLOS: Yes.

MS. OLINGER: So what happens to her position between now and Fall Conference?

ADJUTANT CLOS: She is still in the position, she just won't be acting until after installation.

MS. OLINGER: Okay, so, basically, we don't have a fourth junior until she's actually installed?

ADJUTANT CLOS: If that's the way you want to look at it. I mean she is technically fourth junior vice; she just – if we had a meeting, she wouldn't have no voice or anything right now because she's not been installed.

MS. OLINGER: Okay, thank you.

MS. AMY BOWSER: Amy Bowser, Unit 48, Virginia. Is this going to trickle down to state level and unit level?

ADJUTANT CLOS: It is like that. You can currently do that.

MS. BOWSER: Okay.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Yes. Okay.

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you, Bunny. I would also like to acknowledge the national color bearers and state color bearers. National color bearers were Janet Pratt and Diane Sullivan. And the state were Kathy Coy and Carol Rundell. Please rise so we can see you.

(Whereupon, the color bearers stood and were recognized with a round of applause.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you. I would like to now ask the national sergeant-at-arms to come forward for the purpose of acknowledging those members who served as convention pages.

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the national sergeant-at-arms advanced to the podium.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LYNN HELMS PROSSER: Would all of the pages please come forward to the front of the room, including our junior pages, to be recognized. They've done a great job and I really appreciate them working with all of us to make sure we had a smooth convention so thank you so much.

(Whereupon, the pages advanced to the front of the room amid a round of applause.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: National adjutant – oh, I'm sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right, juniors. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS AND PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER HELMS PROSSER: I would just like to say that everyone has done an excellent job.

But I am really proud of these juniors because they have worked at the doors every day meeting you guys and, also, they've been right here to do anything we needed them to do so I want to say a special thank you for all of our juniors because we're really proud of them. (Standing Ovation)

(Whereupon, the sergeant-at-arms withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium, and the pages returned to their stations.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: I'd like to thank National Sergeant-at-Arms Lynn Helms Prosser for doing a commendable job, as always. (Applause) All pages are now dismissed. Thank you all.

National adjutant, do you have any announcements?

(Whereupon, the commander withdrew from and the adjutant advanced to the podium.)

ADJUTANT CLOS: I would also like to say to the juniors, you all did an amazing job. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause)

Okay, so just a few reminders for everyone else. Reminder that the external portal is open. You can visit myDAV.org and start. If you have not done so, go ahead and start going through there and if you haven't just do it. (Laughter)

The directions are online and actually we are going to try to have a little presentation/seminar at Fall Conference so help maneuver through that if you haven't done it already.

This is brand new. It's a week old. So we are going to be putting it out there on Facebook today; however, we are excited to announce that we now have a recruiting link.

It is called "Sponsor a Supporter." It works just like the recruit-a-warrior on the DAV side so you all will be able to utilize that. (Applause) So watch for that today, probably on Facebook.

That will give you the link to go in to put your membership number in so you can start putting that information out there to others.

Officer reports, currently known as the OERs, can now be processed electronically through the myDAV.org. Again, this will be another little seminar we will help everyone out with at Fall Conference if you are coming.

Programs. For those of you who are not aware of our programs, has everybody heard of the new Family Assistance Program? Okay DAVA for kids? Okay, so what we'll do is we'll just kind of go over a brief little overview of the programs.

Education Scholarship. Scholarship program assists students with attending an accredited college, university or a vocational school. Full-time students who meet the established guidelines may qualify for up to \$2,500 full-time. Part-time students may be awarded up to \$750, who meet the specific guidelines.

The requirements for this scholarship are be at least a high school senior; GPA of at least a 2.5 or higher; provide a narrative or a personal life aspiration report, not to exceed 500 words; list what you have done to serve disabled veterans, their families, in the past two years; complete the most recent application – and I can't stress that enough.

Sometimes we get an application and it's an old one and you have to be disqualified because you're not submitting the proper information, which is a bummer. So make sure you're doing the most recent application. And we will have those online, available starting in the fall.

And then applications must be completed, signed, and postmarked by the deadline. Typically, it's a late March deadline. It has to be postmarked prior to that deadline to be accepted.

The Vocational Training Assistance Program, unfortunately, this program doesn't get a whole lot of action and it's a bummer because if you went to further your education, if you have to do a higher class, this program was designed to offer assistance to ill and injured veterans, their immediate families, seeking higher education at something other than an accredited college.

Say if you want to go to a trade school or just take a class, a career enhancement class, a skill improvement class, or a personal development class, this will provide up to \$500 providing you maintain a C or above or completion of the course.

So both of these forms can be found online. So if you have any other questions you can also let us know. We would help you figure out where those are. Yes? Can you go to the mic so everybody can hear? Thank you.

MS. JACQUE DuBOSE: Jacque DuBose, Unit 13, State of Maryland, does this include certificate programs, as well?

ADJUTANT CLOS: Yes.

MS. DuBOSE: Okay. Thank you.

ADJUTANT CLOS: Family Assistance Program. This program was created to assist the ill and injured veterans, their spouses and their children in times of dire financial need. I want to stress dire financial need.

It's not something that, you know, you just want help with this or that, as we all would. But this one is if you are struggling with something, you are in financial need then you could let us know.

Funds would be paid to the company, not to you. We will not give you the funds. It would go directly to the company or the bill. This is a one-time thing. And the maximum amount will not exceed \$1,000.

Examples would be your electric is getting ready to turn off; your water is going to turn off; maybe you're running late on your mortgage or your rent and medical bills.

DAVA for Kids, this grant was a program designed to assist children up to high school year – we did change that. It was through 17 but we understand sometimes you're a high school senior, you're 18, so it will go through high school.

This grant is up to \$500 to help children go to a camp or an activity or an extenuating circumstance because we understand sometimes if things are tough that the children are the ones who get put on the "back burner" and we want to be able to help them do what they want to do and put a smile on their face.

So, again, not more than \$500 and it can be one time per calendar year. And then, again, it would go directly to the entity, not to the individual.

DAV Caregiver Support Program, brand new. You all should have a flier or a brochure in your bags regarding this. It's a tailored support to help friends and families who are a caregiver to a veteran and/or their family. You can be the veteran or you could be the family member of the veteran.

But it's a free service. I can tell you that some of our members have utilized this service and talking to them after the fact has been amazing. So if anybody is feeling stressed I would highly suggest going ahead and reaching out to the Caregiver Program to see if they can help alleviate some of that stress because I can tell you it would help.

The DAV Scholarship – I like to help DAV spread their awareness, too. So their scholarship is different than the DAV Auxiliary scholarship. They offer up to \$110,000 scholarship opportunities.

So their requirements are any volunteer who is 21 or younger, volunteered for a minimum of 100 hours through DAV or DAV Auxiliary. Scholarships can be used at any accredited institution or higher learning to include universities, colleges, community colleges, vocational schools, and et cetera.

Scholarships must be utilized in full prior to the recipient attaining the age of 25 or within six years of receiving the scholarship.

Moving on, volunteer hours. Who in this room volunteers? (Hands raised) Okay. So more than 80 percent, probably. We expect to see the annual reports. I can tell you Ann and I, we're guilty of this.

We do things. We do volunteer opportunities. And we don't count it. Shame on us. We will start. (Laughter) I know. We're not doing a good service to our organization but it's just what we do.

We help people and it's what we do. We don't think about it until we tell you guys to do it and then we're like, oh, we should be doing that, as well. (Laughter)

So, when you're volunteering, keep those hours and make sure you're filling out those annual report forms. Those annual report forms is what we use to tell people what we're doing.

So in that annual report form that everybody heard in the joint opening, that information, a lot of it came from you guys with you sharing to us what you're doing. That was a lot.

You know we might be a smaller organization, but our members and our volunteers are mighty. So keep up the good work but I really, really encourage you all to submit your annual report forms.

With doing that, make sure you are nominating volunteers for the Outstanding Member of the Year Award and the DAV Volunteer of the Year Award.

So this year we only had a very few and that was disappointing because we know that so many of you guys are out there doing volunteer work and you're not submitting the applications.

So next year let's try to increase these numbers for both us and the DAV and submit those applications.

If you have questions, utilize your resources: our Bylaws, our manual, Fall Conference booklet. We have so much information in those three resources, alone, that a lot of times if you have a question if you would just look through one of your resources you're going to find the answer.

But if you can't and you want to contact your chain of command – your unit, your state – you still don't have the answer, then contact us. It just makes it easier for everyone – and, honestly, you guys, too – because if you have to look for the answer you're going to probably retain it a little bit better.

We will encourage everyone to try to attend Fall Conference this year in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. The dates are September 26th through the 28th. Hotel information can be found in the sheet in your convention bags. It's also on our website.

I can tell you right now that I checked my email the other day and I did have an email from the hotel. Between the two hotels we have nine rooms left. So that's pretty good. We're pretty excited about that.

But, if you're not coming and you need to cancel a room, go ahead and do that. Or if you try to book a room and you have problems, I do have a few extra rooms in my name to help out, too. So contact myself or Ann if you have problems with that and we'll help you get there.

Having said that, our Thursday is going to look a little different this year. We've done the vendor fair in the past. This year we're going to try to do presentations and seminars that will benefit you and a learning curve so you know – (Applause) Thank you. Yes.

So if anybody has any suggestions on maybe, you know, what you feel might benefit, let me know because, you know, of course we can't do it the whole week but we're going to try to do as much as we can in a short period of time to help you guys.

This year we're still going to have Walgreens come and do the flu shots. They will also be offering the newest COVID booster they have. Not sure what room that's going to be held in yet but that will be in the agenda and it will take place Thursday, September 26 from 11:00 to 3:00.

Communication, communication is key. If you all hear me, I always say "Communication is key." But we have to make sure that all of our members in our states and units know what's going on.

With that being said, we send out a monthly newsletter. If you have your current email, you get the newsletter. If you want to opt out you have that opportunity to opt out of that newsletter. But we send it.

We send it. We provide you with the information. But it's your job to read it. You know, even here and several times did we hear, "I didn't know about Forget-me-not Luncheon tickets." Well, if you would have read at least one of the newsletters you would have known that it was in there and there was a deadline.

And then Facebook if you haven't liked our Facebook page, like our Facebook page. We share everything on there – deadlines, information, things you guys need to know. We share on our Facebook page.

Even with that, if you guys have something that you've done and you have pictures and it's been a valuable event for you guys, share it with us. We'll share it on our Facebook because you might be sharing another idea for another state and unit.

So I cannot stress enough, read our communications and like our Facebook page because we do, we keep you "in the loop" with everything.

If you haven't done so, I would say go ahead and sign up for the DAV Commanders Action Network that helps stay in line with the legislative efforts that helps them when you are out there voting or putting in the letters to your legislators.

It literally takes two minutes. They do the work. All you do is get the email. All you've got to do is hit the little "submit" button and they do it right there for you. It's easy. It's simple.

So if you haven't liked the Commanders Action Network, please do so. If you have problems and don't know where it's at, let us know and we'll send you a little link so you can get that done.

Program and Procedure Manual has been updated. They are available online for \$10. I will give you a little secret. They will be in the Fall Conference bags this year. So just giving you a little secret.

I would also like to acknowledge a few people for their help. Chris Easley, thank you for the Facebook livestream and the closed captioning. (Applause)

Karen Eccles, thank you so much. The burden that she has helped us with in the office has been amazing. So thank you so much to Karen Eccles. (Applause)

Tracy Redmond, I know I thanked him yesterday, but he is our transcriptionist and also he does little other things that you guys don't know that he helps us out with a lot. So thank you. We really appreciate you. (Applause)

And all of you, delegates, alternates, members, and guests, thank you for your patience and understanding as we have some little things that we work through. You guys truly are the best and we really, really appreciate you and everything that you guys do for us, as well. So thank you to all of you. (Applause)

Last but not least, thank you AnnMarie for a job well done. You've had an astounding year and we are very thankful for you. (Standing Ovation) That's all I have for now.

(Whereupon, the adjutant withdrew from and the commander returned to the podium.)

COMMANDER HURLEY: Thank you all. Thank you for that. I really appreciate it. It's been my pleasure. These two women are incredible. See, she's flipping my pages for me. (Applause) And congratulations, commander. (Applause)

Is there any further business to come before this Convention? Hearing none, I now declare the 101st National Convention of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary hereby adjourned.

We will immediately go into the Post-Convention National Executive Committee meeting which I will now call to order.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 10:47 o'clock, a.m., on Tuesday, August 5, 2024.)

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Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary National Headquarters

Financial Statements as of and
for the Year Ended December 31, 2023, and
Independent Auditor's Report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the National Finance Committee of
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary National Headquarters:

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary National Headquarters (the "Auxiliary"), which comprise the statement of financial position as of December 31, 2023, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cashflows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements (collectively referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Auxiliary as of December 31, 2023, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Auxiliary and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Auxiliary's ability to continue as a going concern for one year after the date that the financial statements are issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement

resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Auxiliary's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Auxiliary's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Deloitte + Touche LLP

April 9, 2024

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023**

ASSETS	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
CASH	\$ 169,467	\$ 289,101
LOANS RECEIVABLE	4,609	2,232,407
INVENTORY	6,850	362,376
INVESTMENTS	12,346,294	6,157,447
		<u>9,041,331</u>
ACCRUED INTEREST RECEIVABLE	19,172	
LIFE MEMBERSHIP ASSETS:		
Cash	148,862	8,125,503
Investments	3,767,789	409,895
Accrued interest receivable	8,389	129,558
Receivable from general fund	2,232,407	997,552
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 18,703,839</u>	<u>\$ 18,703,839</u>

See notes to the financial statements.

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions			Total
		Service Program	Disaster Relief/Other Programs	Education Loan/ Scholarship Program	
SUPPORT AND REVENUE:					
Membership fees and mandates	\$ -	\$ 4,482	\$ -	\$ 3,575	\$ 8,057
Life membership distributions	338,037	-	-	-	338,037
Contributions	99,019	3,875	42,878	8,240	154,012
Contributed facilities	20,659	-	-	-	20,659
National convention/conference	59,857	-	-	-	59,857
Net investment return	1,752,965	-	-	-	1,752,965
Net assets released from restrictions	65,861	(12,029)	(13,629)	(40,203)	-
Other	200	-	-	-	200
Total support and revenue	2,336,598	(3,672)	29,249	(28,388)	2,333,787
EXPENSES:					
Program services	571,869	-	-	-	571,869
Fundraising costs	48,182	-	-	-	48,182
General and administrative	365,833	-	-	-	365,833
Total expenses	985,884	-	-	-	985,884
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	1,350,714	(3,672)	29,249	(28,388)	1,347,903
NET ASSETS—Beginning of year	6,774,789	413,567	100,309	1,025,940	8,314,605
NET ASSETS—End of year	\$ 8,125,503	\$ 409,895	\$ 129,558	\$ 997,552	\$ 9,662,508

See notes to the financial statements.

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

**STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	Program Services	Fund Raising Costs	General and Administrative	Total Expenses
Salaries and wages	\$ 135,178	\$ 19,264	\$ 73,517	\$ 227,959
Employee benefits	55,399	7,894	30,131	93,424
Distributions to state departments	58,833	-	-	58,833
Professional fees	3,454	-	59,924	63,378
Scholarship program benefits	40,203	-	-	40,203
Printing, stationery, and office supplies	5,591	1,542	20,201	27,334
Conferences and meetings	62,462	-	-	62,462
Fundraising expenses	25,741	15,836	-	41,577
Membership recruitment	-	-	123,947	123,947
Payroll taxes	8,997	1,282	4,893	15,172
Expenses of national convention	79,333	-	-	79,333
Contributed facilities	12,251	1,746	6,662	20,659
Disaster program benefits	13,629	-	-	13,629
Service program Benefits	12,029	-	-	12,029
Expenses of national commander and officers	41,496	-	-	41,496
Postage	914	-	1,682	2,596
Travel	7,135	-	382	7,517
Other	9,224	618	44,493	54,335
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Total	<u>\$ 571,869</u>	<u>\$ 48,182</u>	<u>\$ 365,832</u>	<u>\$ 985,883</u>

See notes to the financial statements.

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:	
Change in net assets	\$ 1,347,902
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash used in operating activities:	
Net change in appreciation of investments	(1,566,897)
Net gain on sale of investments	(8,145)
Changes in assets and liabilities:	
Accrued interest receivable	(3,067)
Inventory	(5,568)
Accounts receivable	(126,953)
Accounts payable and other liabilities	(125,271)
Payable to Life Membership Fund	316,874
Contributions distributable to state departments	(11,454)
Reserve for future distribution of life membership dues	<u>264,533</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>81,954</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:	
Purchases of investments	(8,715,875)
Proceeds from sale of investments	8,758,705
Collections from repayment of education loans	<u>810</u>
Net cash provided by investing activities	<u>43,640</u>
NET INCREASE IN CASH	125,594
CASH:	
Beginning of year	<u>192,735</u>
End of year	<u>\$ 318,329</u>

See notes to the financial statements.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS OF AND FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

1. ORGANIZATION

Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary National Headquarters (DAVA) is a not-for-profit membership and service organization formed under the provisions of the National Constitution of Disabled American Veterans (DAV). DAVA and its membership are organized for the betterment and improvement of the nation's disabled veterans and their families and for cooperation with all patriotic organizations and public agencies devoted to this purpose through volunteer work at veterans' hospitals, community service, educational assistance, legislative action, and encouraging good citizenship and patriotism.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Financial Statements—The accompanying financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAP).

New Accounting Standards—In June 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-13, *Financial Instruments—Credit Losses*, which is included in ASC Topic 326, *Measurement of Credit Losses on Financial Instruments*. The new standard requires a financial asset (or group of financial assets) measured at amortized cost basis, such as trade receivables, to be presented at the net amount expected to be collected. Investments held at fair value where the change in fair value is reported through the change in net assets, as occurs at DAVA, as well as pledge receivables, are excluded from the scope of ASU 2016-13. The new standard revises the accounting requirements related to the measurement of credit losses and will require organizations to measure all expected credit losses for financial assets based on historical experience, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts about collectability. The adoption of ASU 2016-13 did not have a material impact on the financial statements and related disclosures. There were no credit losses recorded for the year-ended December 31, 2023.

Investments—Investments are carried at fair value, and realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected within net investment return, in the statement of activities. The fair value of DAVA's investments is determined based on the quoted market prices of the related securities or quoted prices in active markets for instruments that are similar, or model-derived valuations in which all significant inputs and significant value drivers are observable in active markets. Gains and losses on the sale of investment securities are recognized based upon the specific identification method and are reflected in net investment return. DAVA's policy is to report its cash and cash equivalents within its investment trust accounts, which include money market funds, within investments on the statement of financial positions.

Contributions—Contributions received are recorded at their fair value and are classified as without donor restrictions or with donor restrictions for purpose. All contributions are considered without donor restrictions, unless specifically restricted by the donor. Support that is restricted by the donor is reported as an increase in net assets with donor restrictions.

Contributed Nonfinancial Assets—For the year ended December 31, 2023, there were no contributed nonfinancial assets received, beyond the contributed facilities, which are separately presented in the statement of activities as being utilized in the reporting period. The value of these contributed facilities is estimated based on square footage utilized by DAVA and cost of building maintenance per square foot. See Note 8—Related-Party Transactions for additional details. Based on the nature of these contributions, there is no donor-imposed restriction. Should additional nonfinancial assets be received, they would be separately recognized within the statement of activities and disclosed within the notes to the financial statements.

Accounts Receivable—Amounts recorded as accounts receivable are reduced to their net realizable value, as appropriate.

Allocation of Expenses—The financial statements report certain categories of expenses that are attributable to one or more program or supporting services of the DAVA. Those expenses include salaries and wages, employee benefits, professional fees, printing, stationery, and office supplies, fundraising expenses, payroll taxes, contributed facilities, postage and other. These expenses are allocated between program, fundraising, and administrative based on the percentage of time spent by DAVA staff members on tasks related to each function.

Income Taxes—As a not-for-profit service organization, DAVA has received a determination from the Internal Revenue Service that it is exempt from federal income taxes as a 501(c)(4) organization. Contributions made to DAVA are tax deductible by the contributor as provided in Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Use of Estimates—The preparation of the financial statements in accordance with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosures of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual amounts could differ from those estimates.

3. LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Under the bylaws of DAVA, any eligible person may become a life member. Amounts paid for membership are placed in separate life membership accounts and invested; the only withdrawals permitted from these accounts are amounts required to pay local units, state departments, and National Headquarters (DAVA) per capita dues for services to be provided to the life members. Generally, life membership assets for National Headquarters per capita dues are transferred to the general assets of DAVA at the beginning of the membership year (July 1) and recognized as revenue in the statement of activities. The per capita chapter and department dues are distributed at the beginning of the membership year. The reserve for future distribution of membership dues represents the liability for the future life membership distributions to DAVA, departments, and units to assist with providing member services.

The changes during 2023 in the reserve for future distribution of life membership dues are as follows:

Balance—January 1, 2023	\$ 5,892,914
Additions:	
Membership dues received	<u>346,333</u>
Total additions	<u>346,333</u>
Deductions:	
Dues to National Headquarters	(338,034)
Dues to local units	(53,683)
Dues to state departments	(306)
Other expenses	<u>(9,082)</u>
Total deductions	<u>(401,105)</u>
Net investment return	<u>319,305</u>
Balance—December 31, 2023	<u>\$ 6,157,447</u>

4. FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENTS

Accounting Standards Codification 820, *Fair Value Measurements and Disclosures*, provides a framework for measuring fair value. That framework provides a fair value hierarchy that prioritizes the inputs to valuation techniques used to measure fair value, as follows: Level 1, which refers to securities valued using unadjusted quoted prices from active markets for identical assets; Level 2, which refers to securities not traded on an active market but for which observable market inputs are readily available; and Level 3, which refers to securities valued based on significant unobservable inputs. Assets are classified in their entirety based on the lowest level of input that is significant to the fair value measurement.

The DAVA did not hold any financial assets requiring the use of inputs that are unobservable and significant to the overall fair value measurement (Level 3) during 2023.

The DAVA's policy is to recognize transfers between levels at the actual date of the event. There were no transfers between Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 during 2023.

Asset Valuation Techniques—Valuation techniques used maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs. The following is a description of the valuation methodologies used for assets recorded at fair value. There has been no change in the methodologies used at December 31, 2023.

Cash equivalents, composed of money market funds, are categorized as Level 1. Such investments are valued at cost, which approximates fair value. The money market fund represents DAVA's shares in a registered investment company's fund.

Common stocks and exchange-traded funds (ETFs), categorized as Level 1, are valued at the closing price reported in the active market in which the individual security is traded.

Shares of registered investment companies (mutual funds) are categorized as Level 1. They are valued at quoted market prices that represent the net asset value of shares held at year-end.

The major categories of financial assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis as of December 31, 2023, are as follows:

Asset Category	Fair Value Measurements Using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Total
General fund:			
Cash equivalents	\$ 142,252	\$ -	\$ 142,252
Mutual funds/ETFs:			
Domestic fixed income funds	3,926,578	-	3,926,578
International fixed income funds	616,609	-	616,609
Domestic equity funds	5,593,143	-	5,593,143
International equity funds	2,067,712	-	2,067,712
Total mutual funds/ETFs	12,204,042	-	12,204,042
Total	\$12,346,294	\$ -	\$12,346,294
Life membership:			
Cash equivalents	\$ 184,500	\$ -	\$ 184,500
Mutual funds/ETFs:			
Domestic fixed income funds	2,877,908	-	2,877,908
International fixed-income funds	111,251	-	111,251
Domestic equity funds	594,130	-	594,130
Total mutual funds/ETFs	3,583,289	-	3,583,289
Total	\$ 3,767,789	\$ -	\$ 3,767,789

5. NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DONOR RESTRICTIONS

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of the passage of time or other events specified by donors. The net assets released from restrictions are as follows:

	2023
Subject to expenditure for specified purpose:	
Disaster relief program	\$ 13,629
Service Program	12,029
Education loan/scholarship program	40,203
	<u>\$ 65,861</u>

Disaster Relief/Other Programs—Donations from units and individuals for disaster relief are recorded as net assets with donor restrictions, which are used for members of DAV and DAVA who are in need of temporary financial assistance due to natural disaster, such as flood or earthquake. Donations from this

fund are made to DAV and benefits are paid by DAV directly to the individual. Additionally, included in the net assets with donor restrictions are donations from units and individuals that are to be used for the DAVA Caregiver Initiative, as well as Camp Corral and Winter Sports Clinic.

Service Program—Donations from individuals and amounts received from each unit as a mandate for the service program are recorded as net assets with donor restrictions, which are used for persons eligible for DAVA who are in need of temporary financial assistance in accordance with the bylaws of DAVA. The total amount of assistance is limited to \$1,000 per individual and in the aggregate is limited to total net assets with purpose restrictions. Benefits are paid directly to the service provider and not to the individual.

Scholarship Program—Donations from individuals and amounts received from each unit as a mandate for scholarships are recorded as net assets with donor restrictions from which scholarships are awarded to students in accordance with the bylaws of DAVA. Scholarships are paid directly to the educational institution and not to the student. In 2023, there were 29 scholarships in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$2,500 issued to selected DAVA member applicants for a total of \$40,203.

6. LIQUIDITY AND AVAILABILITY OF FINANCIAL ASSETS

The DAVA’s working capital and cash flows are attributable to the contributions received from general donations throughout the year.

The following reflects DAVA’s financial assets at December 31, 2023, reduced by the amount not available for general use within one year of the statement of financial position date due to donor restrictions.

Total assets, excluding nonfinancial assets (inventory)	\$ 18,696,989
Subtract: Life Membership Fund	(6,157,447)
Subtract: with donor restrictions for specific purposes	<u>(1,537,005)</u>
 Financial assets available to meet cash needs for general expenditures within one year	 <u>\$ 11,002,537</u>

The DAVA has a policy to structure its financial assets to be available as its general expenditures, liabilities, and other obligations come due. In addition, as part of its liquidity management, the DAVA invests cash in excess of daily requirements in various long-term investments. The DAVA’s long-term investments, such as common stocks, index funds, Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), and actively managed mutual funds, are invested with the intent on providing a safe return on investments for the general fund use.

7. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Certain employees of DAVA are covered by the Disabled American Veterans Retirement Plan, a defined benefit pension plan. The benefits are based on years of service and the employee’s compensation. Contributions are intended to provide not only for benefits attributed to service to-date, but also for those expected in the future. In 2023, DAV charged DAVA \$93,424 for its share of the retirement plan costs, as well as other benefits for employees, including health and life insurance and contributions to a defined contribution plan.

DAV provides certain health care and life insurance benefits for its retired employees and their spouses. All employees of DAVA may become eligible for these benefits if they reach normal retirement age while working for DAVA. In 2023, DAV did not charge DAVA for these benefits as such amounts are immaterial.

8. RELATED-PARTY TRANSACTIONS

DAV provides services to the DAVA, which puts DAV in the position to influence operating policies of DAVA.

DAVA occupies space in the DAV National Headquarters' building and also uses certain office equipment owned by DAV. No fees are charged for such usage. The value of these contributed facilities is estimated to be \$20,659 in 2023 and is included as revenue and expense in the accompanying statement of activities.

Certain costs are paid by DAV National Headquarters on behalf of DAVA. Such costs are reimbursed by DAVA. As of December 31, 2023, DAVA owed approximately \$99,180 for such costs.

9. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

No events have occurred after December 31, 2023, but before April 9, 2024, the date the financial statements were available to be issued, that require consideration as adjustments to, or disclosures in, the financial statements.

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