

BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER WORKSHOP

KEEPING THE PROMISE TO
AMERICA'S
VETERANS

Benefits Protection Team Leader Program

Why do we need a Benefits Protection Team?

- Proposed elimination of veterans benefits
- Threats are real and cannot be ignored
- Strengthen our grassroots efforts
- Goal: redouble our advocacy efforts on behalf of the nation's disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors
- To unify and solidify DAV's critical message across the nation.
- To access the BPTL toolkit, [click here](#).



Benefits Protection Team Leaders' Duties

Benefits Protection Team Leader (BPTL) primary responsibilities:

- Supporting DAV's legislative goals
- Coordinating local grassroots efforts
- Encouraging the resolution process at the chapter and department level
- Advocating for local issues that are not in conflict with national resolutions adopted at the national level or with department policies

All time spent on BPTL activities can be counted under the Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP)

- To report hours, please send an email containing your name, address, and the number of volunteer hours to VAVS@dav.org. Please remember to include a phone number where you can be reached in case of questions.



Benefits Protection Team Leaders' Duties (cont.)

- Support DAV's national legislative program (approved resolutions)
- Develop a local grassroots network made up of DAV members, family, friends
- Discuss key legislative issues at your DAV meetings
- Distribute DAV Commander's Action Network (CAN) alerts at chapter and department meetings and encourage members to take action
- Develop a relationship with elected and VA officials in your area
- Communicate DAV position to elected officials



DAV's Legislative Process & You

- DAV Resolutions → Mandates from Membership
- Legislative Program → Guided By Resolutions
- Advocacy Campaign → Get The Word Out
- Influence Elected Officials → Grassroots Advocacy
- Nonpartisan → Benefit Protection over Party

Curious About Your Role? [Click Here!](#)



The Legislative Process and You

RESOLUTION NO. 001

DAV STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Disabled American Veterans 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 all 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 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.

While our first duty as an organization is to assist the service-connected disabled, their surviving spouses and 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.

Our Core Mission

- **Our first duty is the rehabilitation and welfare of our wartime disabled**
- **We WILL NOT take action on any resolution based on other than wartime service-connected veterans**



DAV Resolutions

- Mandates action by DAV and members
- National Constitution, Art. II – Purpose:
 - “...to advance the interests and work for the betterment of all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans....”
- National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.1:
 - “...participating in political issues which have a direct bearing upon the welfare of America’s disabled veterans.”
- National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.2, Para. 1:
 - “No member shall appear before any legislative body or speak in the name of the Organization...propounding a position contrary to any resolution then in effect....”
- National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.2, Para. 2:
 - “No federal legislation shall be sponsored or endorsed...in the name of the DAV...unless it has been approved [by the adoption of a resolution]....”
- National Bylaws, Art. 2, Sec. 2.2, Para. 3:
 - Exceptions: any attempt to “repeal or deprive disabled veterans or their dependents of benefits already provided by law or regulation.” Or when the National Commander, National Adjutant or National Executive Committee deems support of legislation is beneficial to disabled veterans or their families.

DAV Resolutions

The Process:

- Membership Identifies the Issue
 - Chapter, or Department, Introduces Resolution
 - Department Endorses Resolution
 - Sent to National Convention for Consideration
 - Delegates Adopt or Reject Resolution
 - Adopted Resolutions Make Up DAV's Legislative Program
- Legislative Staff is directed by adopted resolutions



How to Write a DAV Resolution

Construction:

- Title:

Title:
Concise, to the point,
instant recognition
of purpose

**SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REMOVE THE PROHIBITION
AGAINST CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIRED
PAY AND VETERANS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION FOR
ALL LONGEVITY RETIRED VETERANS**

- Whereas Clauses:

Whereas Clauses:
Not verbose, provide
solid, defensible
justifications

→ WHEREAS, current law provides that service connected veterans rated less than 50 percent who retire from the Armed Forces 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, 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

- Resolved Clause:

Resolved Clause:
Gives specific course
of action to achieve
goal

→ THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Denver, Colorado, August 8-11, 2015, supports legislation to repeal the offset between military longevity retired pay and VA disability compensation.

BPTLs Reinforce National Legislative Efforts

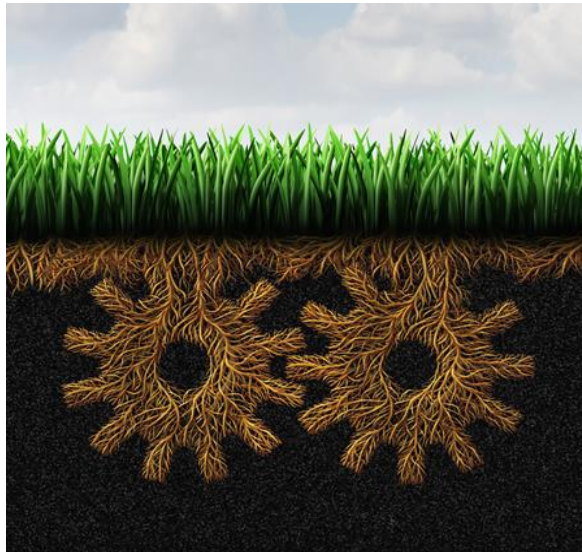
To proactively support the introduction of DAV Resolutions:

- Encourage your elected officials to introduce bills based on a DAV Resolutions
- Encourage congressional staff to reach out to National Legislative Staff if they have questions
- Give national legislative staff a heads up if your member plans to introduce an important bill

Grassroots Taking Action

How It Works:

- Alerts and sample emails are sent out by National through the DAV CAN
- BPTL- Helps get the message out by sending an alert to their local grassroots network
- Follow up with elected officials on key legislative priorities



Call to Action

You receive an alert from DAV CAN:

What's next?

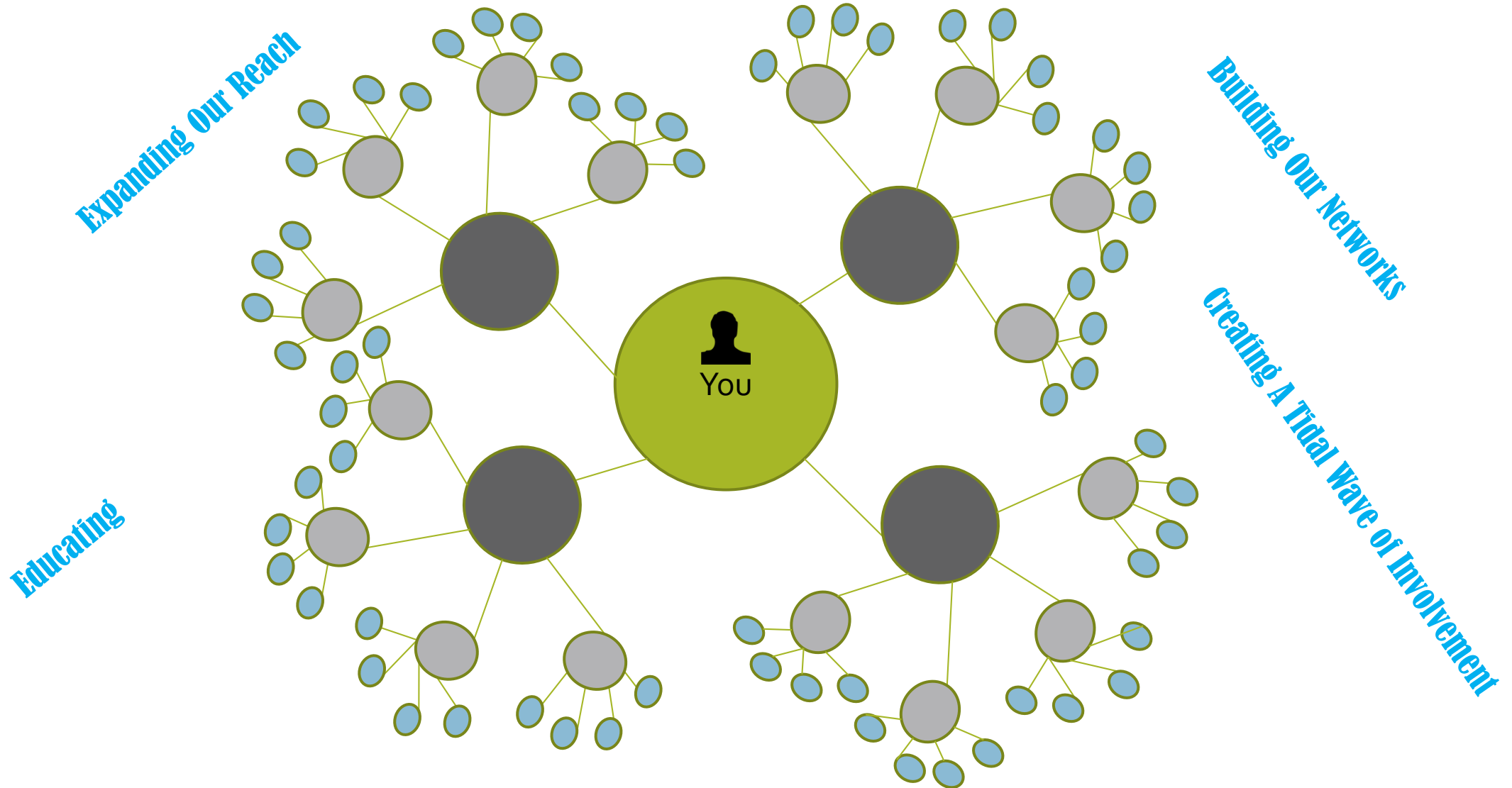
- Get the word out!
 - Phone Calls- If urgent, like the revocation of benefits
 - Emails (BC/Blind Copy your network)
 - Share On Social Media
 - DAV Meetings- Share Info and Provide Updates

So what now?

- In the majority of cases, sending emails to your network and then following up to make sure they took action AND notified their network is all that you need to do
- In a few cases, you will need to take it to the next level



Emails, Calls, and Social Media



Personal Contact with Elected Officials

- Phone Calls
- Office Visits
- Coordinate or Attend a Congressional Town Hall meeting
- It is critical to have regular contact with the elected officials in your area

For a DAV invitation template, click [here!](#)

INVITATION TO BUSINESS MEETING, TOWN HALL MEETING OR SOCIAL EVENT



Dear Senator/Representative John Doe:

On [date], DAV (Disabled American Veterans) [Department of...or Chapter/Unit {name/number}] will hold a [business meeting, social event {explain} or town hall meeting] at [location and time].

As Commander of [Dept., Chapter/Unit] [or On behalf of the Commander of...], I would like to invite you [or your designee] to attend this event and to address the audience about issues important to our nation's injured veterans, their families and survivors. [If you anticipate a large group mention it—I expect about 100 veterans and their families to attend.]

Please have your office contact [name and contact information] about your availability and to obtain additional information about the event.

Thank you for your anticipated prompt response and for your interest in veterans' issues.

Sincerely,

INVITATION TO CANDIDATES' TOWN HALL MEETING



Dear Senator/Representative John Doe:

On [date], DAV (Disabled American Veterans) [Department of...or Chapter/Unit {name/number}] will hold a candidates' town hall meeting at [location and time].

As Commander of [Dept., Chapter/Unit] [or On behalf of the Commander of...], I would like to invite you to attend this event and to address the audience about issues important to our nation's injured veterans, their families and survivors. [If you anticipate a large group mention it—I expect about 100 veterans and their families to attend.]

We have also invited [other candidate(s)] to attend this town hall meeting.

Please have your office contact [name and contact information] about your availability and to obtain additional information about the event. If this date and time are not convenient, please let us know a more convenient time and date.

Thank you for your anticipated prompt response and for your interest in veterans' issues.

Sincerely,

Personal Contact with Elected Officials

- Try to Prepare for Your Visit
- Provide talking points ahead of time
- Pick a spokesperson
- Know your issues
- Stay On Message
- Be friendly, be concise, and be **NONPARTISAN**

For a full set of guidelines, click [here!](#)

GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONGRESSIONAL MEETING



Schedule the meeting

- Call or write your legislator's office to schedule the meeting.
- If you know the specific issues, let the office know. If you are unsure of the issues, let them know you will discuss issues important to ill and injured veterans, their families and survivors.

Preparing for the meeting

- Plan to discuss no more than two or three issues. Meetings usually last 15 to 25 minutes, depending on the member's schedule.
- Learn everything you can about your issue(s).
- Learn everything you can about any opposition to your issue(s), and be ready to defend your position. (On veterans' issues, the opposition usually stems from costs to pay for the program or benefit.)
- Bring talking points of DAV's legislative priorities, which will be available in early February.
- If you are attending the meeting as a group, pick a spokesperson to lead the discussion.

At the meeting

- Arrive about 10 minutes before the appointment time. At least, be on time. Dress neatly and conservatively. Be courteous and respectful. Don't be nervous.
- Do not be upset if you end up meeting with the legislator's staff. They are often more knowledgeable of individual issues than the legislators themselves, and they will inform the legislator of your views and requests.
- Introduce yourself and all members of your group to the legislator or staff members: tell them who

you are and where you live. After a minute or two of "small talk," state your position on the issue(s) you came to discuss.

- Be concise, factual, brief and respectful, and be sure to listen carefully.
- Be ready to answer questions and discuss your issue in detail. If you cannot answer the question, let them know that someone from the DAV National Legislative Department will be in touch with them. Make sure you inform the DAV legislative staff of the question and the person to contact in the legislator's office.
- If the legislator disagrees with you, you can respectfully debate the issues, if you feel comfortable, but do not become over-argumentative. Emphasize the positives of your standpoint, and always end the conversation on a positive note.
- Remain nonpartisan throughout the meeting.

After the meeting

- Always send a follow-up letter or email thanking your legislator or staff members. Also include any additional information you may have offered to provide in support of your issue. The follow-up message is important, because it confirms your commitment to your cause and helps build a valuable relationship between you and your representative.
- Stay in touch with congressional staff throughout the year.

Post-Meeting Etiquette

- Thank elected officials or staffers for their time
- Give a brief synopsis of the talking points
- If you promised to give additional information that was previously unavailable, follow up

For a link to follow to up letters, click [here!](#)

AFTER THE MEETING LETTER SUGGESTIONS

Always send a follow-up letter or fax thanking your legislator or staff members for the time they dedicated to your meeting. Also include any additional information you may have offered to provide in support of your issue. The follow-up communication is important, because it confirms your commitment to your cause and helps build a valuable relationship between you and your representative. If staff was present at the meeting, you were probably given their business card, which contains their email address and phone number. Retain the card for further use.



To member, when you met directly with your Member of Congress:

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you [when I was in Washington, D.C. OR at your District/State Office in [City, State]]. We know you are very busy, and we are grateful that you made time to talk with [me/DAV members] about issues that are important to veterans with disabling injuries, their families and survivors.

You will recall that we touched on [list the key issues that you discussed, e.g. funding for veterans programs, veterans health care or benefits, or other issues].

[You can include some talking points if you wish, drawing on DAV's issue briefs.]

[If you promised to follow up with any other information, include it here.]

We look forward to continuing this relationship and to future meetings with both you and your dedicated staff. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



To member of Congress when you met with staff, with copy to staff:

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with [insert staffer's name] while I was in [Washington, D.C. OR at District/State office in [City, State]]. We realize your staff is very busy, and we were pleased that we were able to meet and discuss issues that are important to our nation's disabled veterans, their families and survivors.

[Jane Doe] had a productive conversation with us about [list the key issues that you discussed, e.g. funding for veterans programs, veterans health care or benefits, or other issues].

[You can include some talking points if you wish, drawing on DAV's issue briefs.]

We look forward to continuing this relationship and to future meetings with both you and your dedicated staff. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
cc: Jane Doe



To staffer, when your meeting was only with the staff:

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you [when I was in Washington, D.C. OR at your District/State Office in [City, State]].

You will recall that we touched on [list the key issues that you discussed, e.g. funding for veterans programs, veterans health care or benefits, or other issues].

[You can include some talking points if you wish, drawing on DAV's issue briefs.]

[If you promised to follow up with any other information, include it here.]

I look forward to continuing this relationship and to future meetings with you. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER TO HOUSE AND SENATE



The Honorable (Representative/Senator)
1234 Street Address
Local Office City, State ZIP

Dear Representative/Senator (Last Name):

As your constituent, I write to request your support of S. 2251, the Seniors and Veterans Emergency Benefits Act.

The Social Security Administration announced that due to low inflation this year, no COLA would be made in 2016. That decision would also apply to veterans receiving financial benefits from the VA, including disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, pension and other benefits.

Senator Warren and 18 of her colleagues jointly introduced a bill, S. 2251, the SAVE Benefits Act. The bill would provide veterans a one-time payment of about \$580 in 2016. This one-time payment would soften the financial blow associated with the lack of a COLA in 2016 for veterans who are disabled due to their military service-related wounds, injuries

pg. 1

and illnesses, and for certain of their dependents and survivors.

As a supporter of DAV (Disabled American Veterans), I strongly endorse this bill and urge you to co-sponsor and work for its passage at the earliest date. Disabled veterans, and especially those who cannot work but consume a greater share of expensive health care resources than other individuals, should not be penalized in trying to maintain their standard of living. Without a COLA in 2016 their limited incomes will not be sufficient to prevent erosion of their personal finances.

Please advise me of the actions you intend to take with respect to this important proposal.

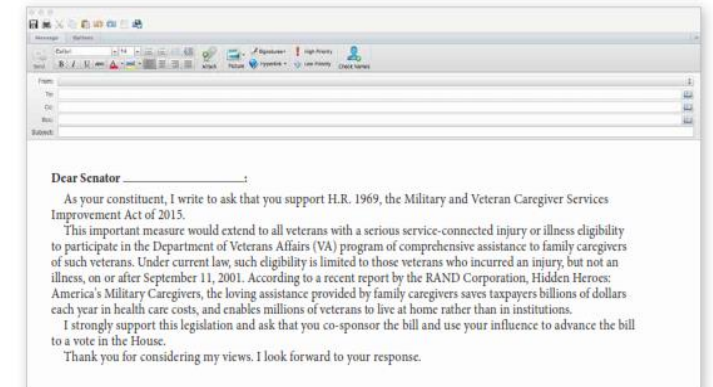
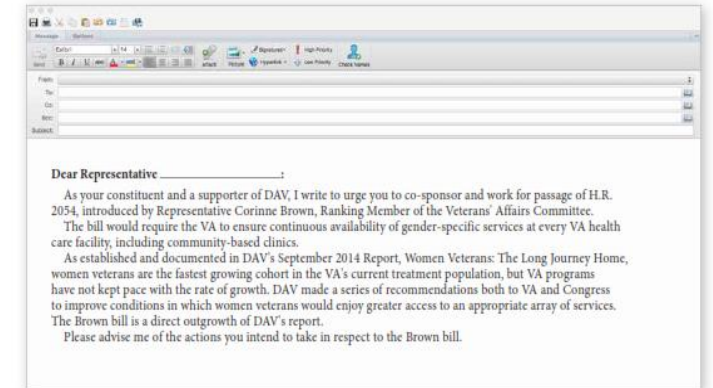
Sincerely,

pg. 2

Writing Campaigns

- It is important to convey to your team the importance of letter writing campaigns
- While emails may be the most common, personal letters are still one of the most effective forms of communicating an issue
- Written communications should be sent to the official's district office rather than their Washington, DC office
- For Legislative Letter Samples, [click here](#).

SAMPLE EMAIL TO ELECTED OFFICIALS



Using Social Media

- Social media is the easiest way to get your message out to the largest audience
- In 2017, 98% of Congress was on Twitter
- Retweet DAV messages/alerts/calls to action
- Post messages on Facebook and LinkedIn
- If you blog, send a copy to the department or chapter website



- facebook.com/DAV
- youtube.com/disabledamericanveterans
- twitter.com/davhq
- instagram.com/davhq
- flickr.com/photos/thedav
- linkedin.com/company/48969

The Media

- The media can be used on important issues

Seek Assistance from Communication or Legislative Staff to:

- Send letters to the editor
- Contact an online newspaper
- Write an Op-Ed
- Reach out to local news stations

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR



July 29, 2012

DAV VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR DISABLED VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS

Dear Editor,

DAV means building better lives for America's disabled veterans.

1.2 million member Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a non-profit charity dedicated to building better lives for America's disabled veterans and their families. The DAV was established in 1920 as the disabled veterans were returning home from World War I. In 1932, Congress chartered the DAV as the official voice of this nation's wartime disabled veterans.

America has many brave military personnel leaving Iraq and Afghanistan. DAV services and advocacy are as relevant today as in anytime in U.S.A. history!

Annually, 200,000 veterans plus their dependents rely on claims for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Defense.

Another aspect of DAV is its comprehensive network of volunteers, who drive the DAV vans, which provide veterans a free ride to and from Durham VA in Durham and McGuire VA in Richmond, Va., which meets medical appointments on time. It is amazing how the moral and the Esprit de Corps improves each individual!

Roanoke Valley Chapter 15 is the North Carolina DAV in Roanoke Rapids. Contact by phone 252-365-0515 to join us at our monthly meeting, which is held on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

Retired Capt. E.M. Brittingham, U.S.N.
Henrico

The Media

SAMPLE OP-ED

Op-Eds and other media requests should be sent through national legislative or communication staff first



September 30, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.

FIX THE VA FOR THE LONG RUN

By Ronald F. Hope

It might be a notable anniversary, but it's not one to celebrate—it's one from which we should learn. And one for which both Congress and the administration should make amends.

One year ago, on Oct. 1, 2013, the federal government shut down. For 16 days, tens of millions of Americans were left in limbo, not least our veterans. Though VA medical centers stayed open because their appropriations are approved in advance, work stopped on more than 250,000 veterans' disability claims awaiting appeals, burials at national cemeteries were scaled back and vital medical and prosthetic research projects were threatened. No one in their right mind wants a repeat of this dark period.

This year, thankfully, no government shutdown appears to be in the offing. But partisan gridlock and political dysfunction are still going strong, to the detriment of our veterans. Congress' failure to approve appropriations bills on time means that this Oct. 1—the start of fiscal year 2015—funding will be provided only through a short-term stop gap (known as a continuing resolution). This means that from now through Dec. 11—and if the past is any guide, perhaps much longer—the VA will not know how much money it has to meet its mission for the rest of the current fiscal year, which runs through Sept. 30, 2015.

Sadly, this is standard operating procedure. Continuing resolutions for the VA have been used in 23 out of the past 26 fiscal years, causing huge disruptions for the department and sabotaging its capacity to effectively plan and administer services for those who have risked their lives for our country.

Even worse, these annual appropriation delays are but one example of the political irresponsibility that has stretched the VA to the breaking point. Funding is not only unpredictable—it's inadequate. Year after year, the White House proposes and Congress appropriates far less than the VA says it needs. As a result, over the past 10 years, the VA has received billions less than what internal projections recommended; DAV estimates nearly \$8 billion less than needed. And investments in the VA's infrastructure have averaged between \$2 and \$3 billion annually, even though approximately \$60 billion is needed over the next 10 years.

pg. 1

Adding insult to injury are various gimmicks schemed up to try to paper over budgetary inadequacies. These go by such names as "projected savings," "efficiencies," "collections," "carryovers" and "contingency funds"—but while they might make the numbers on a spreadsheet look better, they don't actually do anything to help our nation's veterans.

Without the resources to meet the needs of those it serves, the VA is forced either to ration care to current patients, or deny or delay entry into the VA medical system to new veterans. This is unacceptable.

America's veterans need a long-term commitment to rebuild the VA—one that is backed by real resources. That has to start with Congress providing a funding stream that is both predictable and large enough to match the mission.

The good news is that this summer, Congress and the administration made a solid down payment of \$5 billion based on the additional \$17.6 billion the VA acknowledged it needs over the next three years. This investment is necessary to hire more medical staff, launch major infrastructure repairs and lease new facilities—all essential to ensuring the VA can serve the influx of veterans needing health care services.

Now, this down payment requires follow-through in appropriating the rest of the VA's request. After all, if our government can pay for the wars it asks our troops to fight, it must find a way to pay—fully and honestly—for the treatment and services veterans need after they return home.

In addition, Congress should pass the bipartisan Putting Veterans Funding First Act, providing for advance appropriations of all VA operations, as is already done on the medical side. This will ensure that the VA knows its budget before the start of each fiscal year—improving management—and it will prevent cutoffs in benefits processing and payments to veterans that could occur in any future government shutdown. This bill has passed the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees. Now, congressional leaders should make it a top priority to enact this urgently-needed, non-controversial legislation during the lame duck session after the election.

When it comes to our veterans, elected officials often say all the right words, but all the great sentiments in the world won't get a wounded veteran treatment for lost limbs, spinal cord damage, post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries. It's time for our political leaders to match their words to their deeds, put their money where their mouths are, and guarantee realistic budgets and timely appropriations so the VA can, at long last, meet the needs of all veterans suffering due their service and sacrifice for our nation.

Ron Hope, a combat-wounded Vietnam War veteran, is national commander of nearly 1.3 million member DAV (Disabled American Veterans).

pg. 2

Coalitions

- Form a local veterans coalition on key issues
- Work together when possible-show a united front on common issues
- Share information so that everyone is on the same page and there is a clear message
- Pass our message on to other civic groups you belong to



Preparing for DAV Mid-Winter Conference

BPTLs Role

- Work with Department to schedule DC meetings with members of Congress (schedule 1-2 months ahead of Mid-Winter conference)
- Prepare your team for Hill meetings with DAV talking points
- Establish a spokesperson for each meeting
- In-state meeting during Mid-Winter
 - Coordinate with members not coming to DC
 - Encourage them to schedule local meetings
 - Or make phone calls
 - Provide DAV's talking points

SAMPLE MEETING REQUEST LETTERS

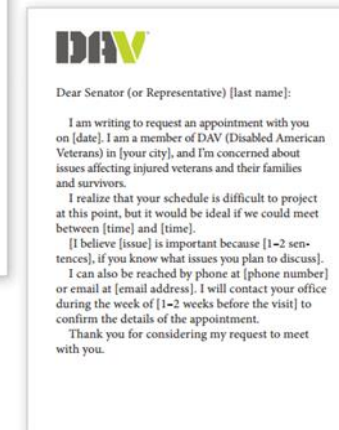
With a few exceptions, Congressional offices in Washington require a written appointment request. Some Members of Congress do offer "walk-in" meeting times in their local offices, but an appointment request is still highly recommended. Appointment requests can be mailed (to the local office), emailed or faxed, but faxing them will get a faster response. Members' contact information, phone and fax numbers can be found on their web sites, in your

phone book or on the DAV website, dav.org/can. Some offices have special meeting request forms and you can contact your legislator's local office to learn the best way to submit your request or, if you have a contact person, speak to your contact in the congressional office for assistance.

The appointment request should be short and simple. Be sure to include your name and, if applicable, leadership title at the chapter or department level.



-OR-



For sample Meeting Request Letters, click [here!](#)

Talking Points will be posted three weeks prior to Mid-Winter [at this location.](#)

Grasstops

What are “Grasstops”?

- “Grasstops” are individuals who have a personal or special relationship with a Member of Congress or key staff.
 - They have direct access to the member of Congress when necessary
 - Grasstops should be identified in your network.

For a better understanding of “Grasstops” click [here!](#)



Grasstops

- Identify Grasstops in your state
- Tell DAV legislative staff who these people are
- Know how they prefer to interact with Member of Congress
 - Personal contact
 - Phone Calls
 - Emails
 - Subject Matter they are willing to discuss
- ***Use them sparingly***—important campaigns only

When Meeting with Members of Congress

Emphasize the work DAV does in your community...

DAV provides:

- Assistance With Claims and Appeals
- Transitional Services
- Rides to VA Facilities
- Job Fairs
- Scholarships
- Educational Seminars
- Disaster Relief
- Mobile Service Offices
- And so much more...



DAV Mobile Service Office

- MSOs can be a demonstrable way to show what DAV does in an elected officials district
- Encourage district offices to contact their constituents informing them when a MSO will be in their area
- DAV's Primary Mission: ensure the nation's sick and ill veterans, their families and survivors, receive their earned benefits and services



Federal and State Elections Nonpartisan

Reminder: DAV is Non-Political, Non-Partisan

DON'T

- Support or oppose a candidate for office on behalf of DAV
- Take positions contrary to DAV national policy

DO

- Get involved
- Hold candidate forums for all candidates
- Inform candidates on DAV issues
- Encourage candidates to support issues benefiting disabled veterans
- Oppose ideas that negatively impact wartime ill and injured veterans – **NOT** the candidate



Questions?

Contact your National Legislative Staff

202.554.3501



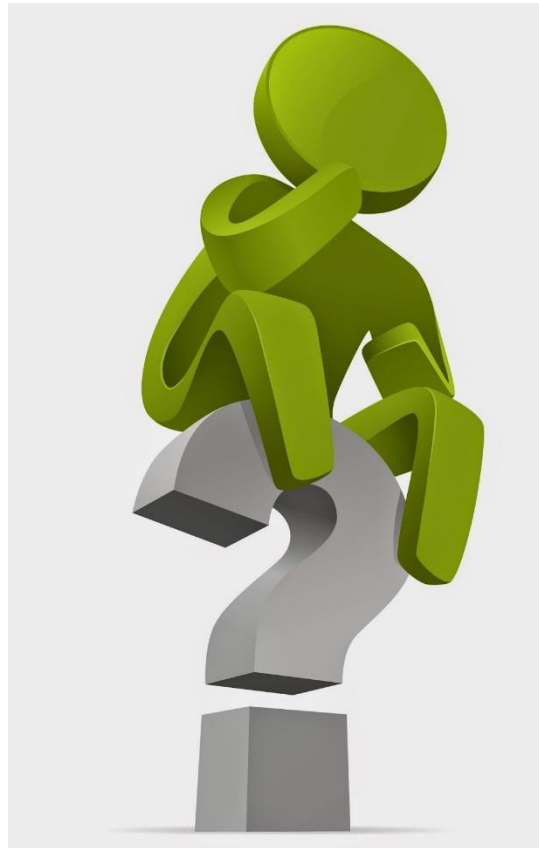
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