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## **ADJUTANT/CEO REPORT TO THE 2026 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION**

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We are having a busy second half of fiscal year 2026.

In January, Department leaders met with the Chapter Commanders to realign chapter boundaries. The current map was from 2015, and we have lost and gained chapters since then, with no formal determination of new boundaries. The new boundaries were presented to and approved by the DEC at Department Mid-term Conference. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Chapter and Unit 28 in Tucson surrendered their charters, requiring another review of chapter boundaries in the Tucson area. This proposed change will be presented at the Post-convention DEC meeting on June 13<sup>th</sup>. We thank the leaders involved in this project for their professionalism during a challenging task.

In February of this year, a remote claims station was operational in Globe, AZ, about an hour and a half drive east of Chapter 8 in Mesa, who previously only got to Globe about every two months. DAV members in Globe/Miami are working on establishing a Chapter there. The Globe Elks Lodge hosts our remote station, including security for the equipment and providing free Internet access. This project cost came in at only \$1,012.

Department, in conjunction with Chapter 1's Commander and the President of the All-Navajo Veterans Auxiliary, initiated a program to bring remote videoconferencing VA claims service to the Navajo Nation in Piñon. The initial remote claims work commenced in March 2026 and has seen active use two days a

week—one day of appointments and one for walk-ins. The project costs \$7,770 over a two-year period.

Now, to give you some perspective on the magnitude of this project... There are 30,221 Veterans living in the Navajo Nation—the largest Native American Nation in the United States. By contrast, there are only 22,794 DAV and 2,924 DAVA members—25,718 total in Arizona.

Because of the resounding success of the program, next week we will be installing a second remote service site in Kayenta, at the Township office building, to better serve our Navajo Veterans in the northern part of the nation. In August, we will install a third site in Ganado, to better serve Veterans in the southern part of the Navajo Nation. In September, a similar remote claims capability is planned for Peach Springs on the Hualapai Reservation near Parker, south of the Grand Canyon. This location will cost up to \$5,370 over a two-year period, followed in October by a remote site installation at the Veterans Memorial Center near Shongopovi, on Second Mesa, on the Hopi reservation.

Beside better serving our Native American Veterans, the “big picture” with remote claims and service capability is to establish new DAV chapters that can better serve our rural communities. New chapters are in the works for Globe AZ, central to a number of rural communities, and Bullhead City in the western area of Arizona, which will include specialized equipment for members who have sight disabilities. We also anticipate a new chapter establishing in Payson and in two to three years in Show Low.

Another initiative implemented by Department was the procurement of “Tablet Kits” for CSO/DSOs to be able to easily conduct claims services out of their chapter buildings—in other words, in the community, as National Commander Nee

wants to see more of. Each “Kit” consists of either a Windows 11 tablet or iPad, detachable case with integrated keyboard, and the appropriate stylus for the tablet. The kits also include 1Gb flash drives and USB-A to USB-C adapters. The kits become the property of the chapters once the Chapter Commander or Adjutant sign for them. To be clear—these are for CSO/DSOs, they are not for chapter officers to use for administrative purposes; therefore, the orders from the chapters were required to have the name and member number of the CSO/DSO included to verify against the NSO’s list of certified service officers. This project had an initial cost of up to \$50,000 and includes kits for current and new CSO/DSOs from the January and June 2026 classes.

In February, officers and representatives from Arizona converged on Washington, DC, for the annual Mid-Winter Conference. Two teams of our members went to the offices of Arizona’s Senators and Congressmen to advocate for DAV’s critical issues for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress. Additionally, National organization leaders presented seminars at the conference center in Arlington, presenting information on new initiatives, updates on planned events and programs, and tips on online safety—especially for our seniors, many of whom are not familiar with the inner workings of technology.

In March, programs and events were pretty much confined to the activities going on in Arizona’s chapters and units, as well as continued refinement of new and enhanced programs and services being offered by Department. This was, of course, the month where remote operations from Globe and Pinon went into full swing! Department also provided a donation-in-kind of 10 MacBook Neo computers, at a cost of \$7949.25, to enable the new Arizona Veterans Resource Center to provide computer classes, job searching, resume writing, and other education and employment services to Veteran clients.

In April, a new program launched to recognize Veterans who continue to serve the Veteran community and their local communities announced the first “Veterans Honor Tour”—a five-day program in Branson, MO, honoring Veterans selected from the many nominations for the trip. The trip takes place in November and is free to the Veterans selected to participate; they may bring their caregiver or spouse along for only \$1,300! The program hit a snag when Allegiant backed out of the original agreement and the trip had to shift to American Airlines—at a substantially higher cost for tickets. A proposal to pay \$10,000 for the increased ticket prices was passed by the Finance Committee and the DEC, essentially saving the trip from serious shortfalls and potential cancellation.

Also in April was an opportunity to participate in National Commander Coleman Nee’s Testimonial weekend in Plymouth, MA. Rich in early colonial history, the site was replete with places to visit and learn some of the history not in schoolbooks or the movies. That Friday, we all donned our RED shirts and drove to Hyannis to serve a nice luncheon and get to know the stories of 60 Veterans who are regularly in need of services from the local food bank. It was an amazing opportunity to get to know these proud Veterans! Saturday night was the testimonial dinner, with interesting and, thankfully, short speeches from government officials, senior military leaders, and the National Auxiliary Commander, before hearing from National Commander Nee, who recounted how thankful he was for the welcome he received everywhere he visited during his term, and how he was impressed by the heart of service that members show toward their brother and sister Veterans and their communities.

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, Senior Vice Rod Hage and I participated in the council meeting of the 16 Chapters of the Central Navajo Veteran Agency (or CNVA) at the Piñon Veteran Association hogan in Piñon. 12 of the 16 Chapters were represented at the

council meeting that day, which also included Tim Johnson, Veterans Affairs representative to Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren, whose office is in Window Rock. We were asked to lead off the presentations, discussing how DAV is working with the Navajo Nation to bring much needed services to the 30,221 Veterans in the Navajo Nation. Of interest was discussion of the work to transfer \$30M to the Piñon Chapter and All-Navajo Veteran Auxiliary to build a “Warriors’ Rest” housing facility for Navajo Veterans along with an associated resource center.

Over the two calendar years of 2026 and 2027, we will be providing previously unimagined access to Service Officers and resources throughout Arizona, establishing a dozen remote claims stations in areas without close access to DAV services.

April also marked the month of annual elections for most of our chapters, followed by installations in May. Congratulations to all the newly elected and appointed officers in all 14 Chapters in the Department. And to the new Adjutants, I am available for any questions you may have or resources you may need. You act as the CEO of your chapter, responsible for making all the gears and wheels turn in the right direction, be chief administrator, work hand-in-hand with your Treasurer, and become an expert at herding cats. I plead with you for one important thing—please do not let things get to a crisis level before reaching out for help or advice! My first responsibility is to support the Chapters, and I am available for that whenever you need it. I am completing year one of my sentence as Department Adjutant & CEO, so I will be here to assist as necessary...

In April/May 2026, Chapter 39 conducted Camp Corral donation collection at Golden Corral. Their efforts produced an amazing \$15,290 to help send the children of disabled Veterans and Gold Star families to camp at no expense. For

this springtime Camp Corral push, chapters give of their time and talents without receiving a penny for the chapter itself—100% of the proceeds go towards the youth who deserve to “Just Be Kids” and have the Camp Corral experience.

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, I had the honor of participating as keynote speaker in the memorial ceremony at the Nazlini Chapter of the Navajo Nation. Their Memorial Day event was titled “Our Nazlini Heroes are Never Forgotten.” It was a rare occasion, with most of the Veterans in attendance wore the uniforms representative of their military service department and the era during which they served. The ceremony started with raising the American Flag by an honor guard of Navajo Veterans in the uniform of their service era. Following the flag ceremony, I provided a keynote address that celebrated the amazing historical contributions of Navajo Veterans since the American Revolution. In addition to the famous Navajo Code Talkers, for which a memorial exists in the Navajo Nation Capitol of Window Rock, I noted the Army’s 45<sup>th</sup> Division in World War II—that boasted a large percentage of Native American soldiers. The 45<sup>th</sup> Division participated in critical landings at Anzio, Sicily, and France—and were essential in the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp in Nazi Germany, for which they received praise from General George S. Patton. Following my remarks, Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren, addressed the assembly...although he spoke in the native Navajo language—the same language that has been used for centuries. The final part of the event was a beautiful ceremony unfolding Veterans’ memorial flags, opening the flags to the sun and air, refolding them, and presenting the flag back to the relative in the same manner as when the flag was initially presented. The Navajo regard our flag with great respect as a living entity. I was able to speak with President Nygren after the ceremony, who thanked DAV for taking the initiative to serve Native American Veterans.

I want to congratulate the Arizona Chapters and Units that made their membership quota for FY2026:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Total Members</u>	<u>% of Quota</u>
Department of Arizona	22,724	100.30%
Tucson Chapter 4	1,532	101.31%
East Valley Chapter 8	4,017	100.97%
Fry Chapter 14	1,170	100.00%
Star Chapter 24	1,627	108.85%
Sahuarita/Green Valley Chapter 38	244	104.92%
Oro Valley Chapter 39	48	108.33%

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Total Members</u>	<u>% of Quota</u>
Department of Arizona	2,924	100.17%
East Valley Unit 8	75	114.67%
Louis Levy Unit 11	319	100.63%
Fry Unit 14	57	100.00%
Rincon Renegades Unit 18	352	100.85%
San Pedro Valley Unit 26	32	115.63%
Pinal County Unit 36	43	102.33%

*During the last year, all has not been wine, chocolate, and roses.* Department officers were required to go to 3 chapters and shut down their bar/lounge operations as ordered by the National Commander for noncompliance with NEC Regulation 4. As we know, the loss of a major fundraiser can be very challenging for a chapter to recover from, but Department has been willing to help them move on. Unfortunately, one of our Chapters—and their associated Unit—decided that they could not make things work without their bar, so they surrendered their charters. This is also a valuable lesson on why it is vitally important for Chapter Commanders, Senior Vice, Junior Vice, Adjutants, Treasurers, Judge Advocates,

and Executive Committees to read, reread, study, and understand National, Department, and Chapter Bylaws and Regulations, as well as other DAV directives. In fact, every member should be familiar with the basic provisions of these governing documents—for how can you be a participatory member of your chapter if you do not understand how the chapter and its governance are designed to work?

This past year, my primary goal was to enhance communications between Department and the Chapters. I believe that the flow of communications from Department has improved, as I have made efforts to ensure that important information—both at the Department and National levels—were passed to Chapters in a timely manner through the use of Adjutant Memoranda. What I hope can improve this coming year is responses back from the Chapters—but even more importantly, communication with my office concerning things that the Chapters need, issues with which they need assistance, and upcoming important events.

Over much of the last decade, DAV Chapters and DAVA Units have operated in separate, parallel silos, with little positive interaction in most cases. For the upcoming year, my intent is to work with the new Department Auxiliary leadership to foster better cooperation and collaboration, first at the Department level and, as it comes to fruition, pushing best practices down to the Chapters and Units. By working together, respectfully and collaboratively, we will better succeed in our primary mission of serving our Veteran Community

In closing, I want to take just a few minutes to remind all of us about the obligation we all took upon ourselves when we became members of Disabled American Veterans. Some chapters conduct the welcoming ceremony in the Official Ritual of DAV at their general meetings, many do not:

*In the presence of Almighty God, and my comrades here assembled, I promise and declare that I will always uphold and maintain the Constitution, and laws of the United States of America; and I will always show the proper courtesies to the flag of our nation, and give to it the love and devotion it merits. I further promise, insofar as feasible, always to aid and assist any disabled comrade; that I will always uphold the integrity and character of a comrade veteran; that I will do my best to exemplify the principles of comradeship, loyalty and devotion. I further pledge that I will support and obey the Constitution and Bylaws of the national, state, and local organization. All of which I now affirm.*

These same values and responsibilities are embodied in Article II of the DAV National Constitution as well. Like the United States Constitution, our DAV National Constitution lays the foundation for all that we do in accomplishing our mission and vision. Building upon that foundation empowers programs and services to the Veteran community—Veterans, their dependents, their caregivers, and their survivors—that support the DAV mission and vision. A firm foundation will stand the test of time...

For those of us who hold offices at the Chapter, Department, and National levels, to me, the most important part of the oath that we take actually comes after affirming our obligation to keep the oath:

*I charge you to be earnest, faithful and devoted, and to remember that our mission as a Disabled American Veterans organization is not fulfilled until all our country's war-time disabled, and their dependents and survivors, have been adequately cared for.*

We have many good and devoted members and volunteers across this great state. No one can do everything—each chapter has its own areas of expertise and experience and even its own personality. Together, drawing on the combined talents of each of our organizations, renewed partnerships with VFW, American Legion, and AMVETS posts, and with enhanced support and collaboration with our Auxiliary units, each one of us can find a place and a way to make a positive impact on the lives of our Arizona, District 18, and National Veteran community.

***ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT!***

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This concludes the Adjutant's Report for the 103<sup>rd</sup> Department of Arizona annual convention, this 12<sup>th</sup> day of June 2026.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Carl B. Forkner  
Adjutant & CEO  
AVHOF Class of 2025  
Disabled American Veterans  
Department of Arizona