



Remarks for National Guest Department Conventions 2026

Acknowledge introduction, distinguished guests, and DAV Auxiliary officers and members, as well as others in the audience.

Good morning everyone—and welcome to the 2026 Department of Arizona Convention.

It's always energizing to stand in a room filled with leaders who don't just believe in DAV's mission but live it. The measure of this organization has never come from a building in Washington or Kentucky. It comes from rooms like this. From leaders like you.

I bring greetings from National Commander Coleman Nee and National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski. They are deeply grateful for the work you do every day for veterans and their families, survivors and caregivers.

At DAV, our values aren't just framed on a wall. They are carried out in hospitals, VA medical centers, congressional offices and wherever our members find themselves.

Leadership matters now more than ever.

We're operating in a complex environment. Policy debates are shifting. Resources are being scrutinized. Hopes are high. In times like these, organizations can shrink from the moment—or rise to meet it.

DAV rises.

But rising requires strength. And strength requires people.

So before I share our progress, I want to speak plainly about something that affects everything we do.

<PAUSE>

Membership.

Last year, we learned that DAV membership dipped below one million. That might not seem like a big deal, but I assure you, it is. It's a number that measures far more than our own ranks; it tells the story of our influence. Of our reach. That's credibility at the negotiating table.

When Congress debates toxic exposure. When VA policies shift. When funding decisions are made—lawmakers pay attention to organizations that represent large, engaged constituencies.

Our voice carries weight because it represents veterans across every state and community.

But that strength must be sustained.

Membership growth is not someone else's responsibility. It's ours. **Every** chapter. **Every** department. **Every one** in this room.

Recruitment isn't about paperwork—it's about connection. It's about looking a fellow veteran in the eye and saying, "You don't have to navigate this alone."

We can't assume veterans will find us. We must go to them.

So please, use the tools available on MyDAV.org. Share our story in your communities. Partner locally. Volunteer. Show—not just tell—what DAV membership means. Because when we grow, so does our impact.

And our impact cannot be overstated.

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Over the past year, DAV has continued expanding the ways we support veterans and the people who care for them. More than 5.5 million Americans serve as caregivers for veterans. Through DAV Caregivers Support, we're providing evidence-based resources and building pathways to help caregivers navigate everything from burnout to benefits.

This program reflects who we are at our best: identifying a need and responding with purpose. I encourage you to spread the word. Someone in your community needs this support.

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We're also investing in the next generation of servant leaders.

Through DAV Scholarships, each year we award 15 scholarships totaling \$140,000 to young people who've demonstrated a commitment to serving veterans. These students represent the future—not only of DAV but also of civic leadership in this country.

Encourage qualified students to apply. Because when we reward service, we multiply it.

<PAUSE>

And of course, none of this happens without volunteers.

In the past year, DAV volunteers once again logged millions of hours supporting veterans nationwide. Drivers ensured veterans made it to critical medical appointments.

Volunteers showed up in VA facilities. And thousands rallied around our annual Community Impact Day.

But numbers only tell part of the story.

Behind every mile driven and every hour logged is a veteran who didn't miss their VA appointment or medical treatment. A veteran who didn't face the daunting process of VA claims alone. A veteran who was reminded that someone still has their back.

That's the difference you make.

<PAUSE>

When disasters struck communities across this country, DAV's Disaster Relief Program responded quickly, providing direct financial assistance to veterans who lost their homes, possessions and stability. In moments of chaos, DAV provides certainty.

<PAUSE>

And our advocacy work remains stitched into our DNA.

Our national, department and chapter service officers continue to secure billions in earned benefits for veterans and their families. More than charity, that's justice delivered.

<LEAD APPLAUSE/PAUSE>

As we look ahead, I want to leave you with this.

The challenges facing veterans are evolving. The expectations placed on us are rising. The public is watching how we lead.

That means communication, transparency and accountability matter.

As leaders, we set the tone. We build trust. We foster unity. And we model the values we expect others to follow.

If we remain disciplined in our mission, no challenge is too big for DAV.

The work happening here in Arizona is a powerful reminder of what local leadership can accomplish. Your commitment reinforces our national voice.

So, let's lead boldly. Let's recruit intentionally. Let's communicate clearly. And let's never forget why this organization exists.

Because somewhere right now, a veteran needs us. And we will be there.

Thank you, and let's make 2026 a year defined by growth and forward momentum.