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2026 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION: COMMANDER'S REPORT

Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow veterans, distinguished guests, and members of our DAV family.

It is both an honor and a privilege to be here with all of you at our annual state DAV convention.

Each year, this gathering reminds us all of what can be achieved when a dedicated group of individuals remains focused on one powerful mission: serving those who have served.

Today, I stand before you to share a progress report on our collective journey over the past six months, a period marked by collaboration, tenacity, and innovative solutions to the evolving needs of our veteran community.

In February, we all traveled to Washington, D.C. for the DAV Mid-Winter conference and meetings. Alongside other leaders nationwide, we met with our Arizona Congressmen and women and Senators staffers to champion the rights of our state's veterans. We addressed concerns about benefits, access, and the pressing need to streamline services for our disabled veterans among many other issues. These meetings are crucial to ensuring our voices are heard at the highest levels, and our proposals are shaping legislative priorities that will benefit all veterans in Arizona and across the nation.

As a way to emphasize the importance of unity among veterans' organizations, that commitment that was tested earlier this year at the State Capitol. In a joint venture with the VFW, DAV, and American Legion, we united to stop a harmful legislative bill that would have empowered so-called "claim sharks." These predatory actors threaten the integrity of our benefits system and take advantage of those who need our support most. Because of our efforts, we preserved the safeguards that protect veterans seeking claims assistance.

We are dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. We accomplish this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the 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.

March also brought a moment of celebration and gratitude. Prescott VA received a generous vehicle donation from Ford, which we marked with a presentation and ribbon-cutting ceremony. The vehicle was assigned to the Flagstaff DAV Satellite dispatch office. Where this new addition will greatly enhance our transportation capacity for Flagstaff's veterans, ensuring many more can access the care and resources they deserve. The ceremony stood as a testament to the power of community partnerships and the value placed upon our veterans by civic-minded organizations.

Looking towards new frontiers, I facilitated the design of a dual-wheelchair capable golf cart for the Tucson VA Hospital to shuttle Veterans around the 147-acre campus. This is more than a matter of convenience; it's about dignity and inclusion. If the pilot proves successful, we plan to secure an additional cart for Tucson and then extend this innovation to both Prescott and Phoenix. Every veteran, regardless of mobility challenges, deserves the full experience of campus access.

Throughout these months, I still managed the DAV Transportation program at the Prescott VA from Tucson to ensure our Veterans get to their scheduled medical appts. I also worked closely with the new Fleet Management staff in Prescott inventorying our vehicles, turning in excess vehicles, and making sure vehicle titles are properly managed.

We're still looking for a Hospital Service Coordinator/Transportation Coordinator at the Prescott VA. To our northern chapters, please put the word out to see if anyone is interested in working in this much-needed position. These aren't glamorous tasks, but they are foundational, ensuring that our transportation network is both efficient and sustainable.

In April, I presented a briefing on VA disability claims to an Arizona National Guard unit in Marana. Educating 65 service members, especially those still serving, about the VA claims process. It empowers them to seek assistance early and how avoid unnecessary obstacles on their path to benefits when they separate or retire.

April also saw us at the 16th Arizona Coalition for Military Families' Symposium, the annual statewide gathering that unites all state veterans' service organizations. This symposium fosters collaboration, and I was proud to contribute as we connected, shared resources, and developed new strategies to support not just today's service members, but all those who have served in the past.

More recently, in May, I attended Chapter 20's new officer installation, an important event highlighting leadership renewal and the continuity of service in our organization. It's inspiring to see new leaders step forward, eager to carry the torch and build on the legacy we've established.

In Tucson, I met with Dr. Dom Tatum at the VA Homeless Clinic to explore setting up a walk-in claims day specifically for our homeless veterans. Too often, those most in need of support struggle to access our services. By meeting them where they are, we can make meaningful strides to reduce the barriers these veterans often face.

Additionally, I coordinated the addition of a new CSO/DSO at the Tucson VA, in the VSO Building 13. Well, I have great news, as I was leaving the office on Monday, I was notified that Linda Kruppa, from Chapter 18, has been on-boarded into the VA volunteer system and can start processing claims at the VA next week. We are going to work out a time schedule to possibly work 1 day in the VSO office and 1 day at the Homeless Clinic, processing claims directly and increasing our organizational footprint at the VA—all to ensure veterans get hands-on, immediate claims support.

Our mission has also been extended to the State Indian reservations, working diligently to ensure that Native American veterans, who often reside in remote or underserved areas, have access to the claims support and benefits they rightfully deserve. Carl will dive deeper into the program here shortly. It's really exciting because we have been getting a lot of national attention. So much that the DAV National Commander Nee will be visiting next month for a briefing and a tour on the project. They want to benchmark our program for the other reservations across the country.

For Memorial Day, I had the honor of presenting our DAV Department wreath for the day of honor and remembrance for our fallen brother and sister Veterans. It was truly an event that really moved me.

Department Leadership also attended the Congressman Juan Ciscomani's from Legislative District 6 presentation of the Veteran-Servant Leadership award given to Billy Jarvis and Kevin Karvinen. The Veteran Servant Leader Award recognizes veterans who have continued to serve their communities after their military careers. This award honors their ongoing commitment to service and leadership in civilian life. Congratulations again Kevin and Billy.

But leadership isn't only about achievements and new initiatives. There are also difficult decisions that ensure the integrity and future of our organization. It was with a heavy heart that, as directed by DAV National Headquarters, we had to shut down three of our four remaining chapter bar operations in Arizona due to failure to abide by National Executive Committee regulations. I know this greatly disappointed many, trust me I heard and felt your frustration and pain through face-to-face conversations and emails however, it was totally out of our control. Our national, state, and chapter bylaws are not just guidelines, they are the very foundation of our trust and accountability that we all affirm when taking our oaths of office. I cannot reinforce it enough: our governing documents must be strictly enforced. I urge all chapter leadership to form committees to review your bylaws at least annually, and more frequently as needed, to ensure

compliance and proactive adaptation to changing times. Also look at the Departments' bylaws and if there are any suggestions for updates/modifications, have your chapter committee's present them to your membership, approve them and forward them so our committee can review them.

Another area I want to address—because you told us it needed improvement—is communication. Last June, one of the strongest points of feedback we received was the need for more and better communication between the department and the chapter level. In response, I had charged my Adjutant with ensuring timely notification of everything chapters need to stay ahead of deadlines and up to date on all pertinent DAV issues. By now, I'm sure most of you have noticed your email boxes have been just a little busier from Department. I realize this can be overwhelming at times, but this improved communication measure is essential for our department staff operations and for your success as chapter leaders.

Yet, we still see some chapters slow to respond or missing crucial deadlines. Especially when it comes to DAV National suspenses, AFR/OER and such. I must charge every chapter officer: check your email daily. If you know you will be unable to manage or will be out of the office, please make arrangements for someone reliable to monitor it in your absence and ensure the chapter responds in a timely manner. Let Carl know when you will not be available and provide an alternate person who'll sit in your place. Even in these days of electronics, we can still set up a good old fashioned task board on the wall and list all the tasks that are required each day, month and year, who's responsible and their deadline suspense and annotate when it started and when the tasks are completed. So, at a glance each time anyone walks by the board, you'll know what needs to be done and can politely remind those whose task it is to complete it. When a hard deadline suspense has been established from National and or Department, there will be no extensions accommodated. This discipline is non-negotiable, as it keeps our entire organization in compliance and operating smoothly for our fellow members and Department staff.

In conclusion, as I recount these milestones from myself and the Department, I want to emphasize that none of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of all of our members our volunteers, my Department Admin staff, my Adjutant and line officers and partners throughout the state. Each achievement reflects not just my work, but the strength of our DAV community—united in the cause of service and support. We are dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans, their families, their caregivers, and their survivors to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity.

Looking ahead, let's continue to harness this momentum. Let's embrace new ideas, foster deeper collaboration, and remain vigilant in defending the benefits, rights and welfare of every Arizona veteran. Together, there's nothing we cannot accomplish.

Thank you for the honor of serving alongside each and every one of you. I look forward to another year of progress, impact, and camaraderie.

Thank you, and God bless our veterans and God bless the United States of America.

This concludes my Commander's report.

Respectfully submitted,



Bruce W. Nogar