



# Disabled American Veterans Department of Florida Newsletter

By Al Linden, Executive Director



June 30, 2016

As of June 30 2016 our membership was 62,338. The goal for life membership for this year has been made.

THE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION WAS A SUCCESS, AND I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL CHAPTERS AND DELAGATES WHO PARTICIPATED. I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT I SAW SOME DELAGATES IN THE LOBBY, WHONEVER ATTENDED A MEETING. CHAPTERS SHOULD TELL ALL DELAGATES IN THE FUTURE, IF THE CHAPTER IS PAYING THEIR FEES, THEY ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND ALL BUSINESS SESSIONS. THANKS TO ALL CHAPTERS WHO MET THEIR MEMBERSHIP GOAL. YOUR EFFORTS ENABLED THE DEPARTMENT TO MEET THEIR GOAL AS WELL. THE NATIONAL CONVENTION IS BEING HELD IN ATLANTA, GA JULY 30 THRU AUG 3<sup>RD</sup>. IF YOU HAVE ATTENDED A NATIONAL CONVENTION BEFORE, YOU KNOW THAT A LOT OF KNOWLEDGE IS AVAILABLE IF YOU ATTEND THE SESSIONS. THERE IS ALSO A LOT OF TIME TO SOCIALIZE AND ENJOY THE AREA. ATLANTA IS A SHORT DRIVE, SO HOPEFULLY WE WILL HAVE A GOOD TURNOUT. WE HAVE A CANDIDATE FOR NATIONAL JR. VICE COMMANDER, (ANDY MARSHALL), SO WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A GREAT TURNOUT. WE WILL BE HOSTING A HOSPITALITY FUNCTION FOR ANDY, AND AGAIN. WE NEED OUR DELAGATES TO SHOW UP AND PARTICIPATE.

ALL CHAPTERS SHOULD HAVE THEIR ELECTION OF OFFICERS FORM SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT AND NATIONAL. IF YOU HAVE NOT SUBMITTED THIS FORM , YOU ARE IN VIOLATION OF THE BY-LAWS.

FINANCIAL REPORTS ARE DUE IN SEPTEMBER.

THANK YOU FOR ELECTING ME COMMANDER FOR 2016/2017. IF A CHAPTER IS HAVING PROBLEMS, CONTACT ME BEFORE THE PROBLEM GETS OUT OF HAND, FOLLOW THE BY-LAWS OF NATIONAL, DEPARTMENT AND YOU CHAPTER AND YOU WILL BE OKAY.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE ELECTED DEPARTMENT OFFICERS. I LOOK FORWARE TO WORKING WITH YOU. JACK JOHNSON, COMMANDER. YOU CAN REACH ME AT [dav150jack@gmail.com](mailto:dav150jack@gmail.com) or 352-250-4743

Also be reminded that **Chapter Annual Financial Reports are due by September 30 each year.** **Chapter Officers Reports** are due within 10 days after installation each year or when changes are made. ALL chapters make \$50,000 and less and do not file any other IRS form must file a N990 by November 15 each year. Last year 4 chapters failed to do so and their tax exempt was removed and it cost them over \$400 to get it reinstated.

## Service School and Midwinter Conference

**The Service School and Midwinter Conference will be held January 16-22,2017 at the Lake Mary Marriott.**

	<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>	
	As Of June 30, 2016	
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,300,087	
TOTAL LIABILITIES		\$110,346
	-----	
TOTAL LIABILITIES&FUND BALANCES	\$1,300,087	

Bay Pines VAVS	\$2304
Gainesville VAVS	\$1000.00
Tampa VAVS	\$1950
Lake City VAVS	\$2225
WPB VAVS	\$1000
Miami VAVS	\$2200
Orlando VAVS	\$7550
Eglin CBOC	\$0

**It doesn't cost much  
to show you care**



**about  
Disabled  
American  
Veterans**

**☒ on your next  
drivers license application,  
then they know you care!**

## FREE DENTAL CARE FOR VETERANS ON JUNE 25, 2016

Veterans Will Receive Free Dental Care at Nearly 400 Aspen Dental Practices  
Help Support Aspen Dental's National Day of Service on June 25th

Thousands of veterans will receive free dental care on Saturday, June 25th, when doctors and their teams from nearly 400 Aspen Dental-branded practices in 33 states open their doors for Aspen Dental's National Day of Service – an event that is expected to be the largest single-day oral health initiative for veterans in 2016.

Like millions of other Americans, veterans can struggle to find oral health care when they need it. That's why Aspen Dental's Healthy Mouth Movement, a community-giving initiative launched in 2014, is focusing its efforts on helping veterans get the dental care they need.

- Interested veterans should call 1-844-AspenHMM to find a participating practice in their community and schedule an appointment in advance – space is limited and appointments are filling up fast!
- Please spread the word in your community! Be sure to use [#HealthyMouthMovement](#) and tag Aspen Dental when posting on social media.

### Sample Post

On June 25th @AspenDental practices in Florida will be providing free dental care to veterans. Call 1-844-AspenHMM to schedule an appointment! [#HealthyMouthMovement](#)

### Participating Practices in Florida

Naples, FL

Estero, FL

Fort Myers, FL (Cypress)

Fort Myers, FL (Palm)

Port Charlotte, FL

Gainesville, FL

St Augustine, FL

Jacksonville, FL (River City)

Jacksonville, FL (Atlantic West)

Yulee, FL

Jacksonville, FL (Orange Park)

Crestview, FL

Pensacola, FL

Fort Walton Beach, FL

Ocala, FL

West Melbourne, FL

Altamonte Springs, FL

Clermont, FL

Port Orange, FL

Lady Lake, FL

Daytona Beach, FL

Merritt Island, FL

# INCOME / EXPENSES VS BUDGET

## June 30, 2016

		Actual	Budget	Difference
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>				
<b>Income</b>				
	Accounts receivable-Orange City	0.00	0.00	0.00
	jcmo-16	0.00	0.00	0.00
	JMCO-13	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6001 - Convention Income	6,332.00	7,500.00	-1,168.00
	6030 - Midwinter Income	14,800.00	10,200.00	4,600.00
	6050 - Dues from National	149,185.00	150,000.00	-815.00
	6075 - Donated Funds for Vans	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6100 - Donation fr Service Fd-Principl	0.00	332,510.00	-332,510.00
	6140 - National Fund Raisers	274,654.50	200,000.00	74,654.50
	6200 - Chapter & Unit 10%	75,448.18	15,000.00	60,448.18
	6300 - Department Publication	0.00	200.00	-200.00
	6303 - National Candidate Fun	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6310 - Chapter Closeouts	9,072.38	0.00	9,072.38
	6311 - Donations	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6315 - Orange City Income	18,000.00	0.00	18,000.00
	6330 - Lake Panosofkee	4,100.16	4,100.00	0.16
	6331 - Lakeland Bldg Mortgage	20,590.00	17,000.00	3,590.00
	6332 - Sarasota rent	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6333 - Orange City Mortgage	0.00	18,000.00	-18,000.00
	6334.1 - Sarasota Bldg Mortgage Payment	0.00	11,000.00	-11,000.00
	6350 - Drivers License Income	26,580.11	60,000.00	-33,419.89
	6410 - 2015 Service Officer's	14,631.00	12,000.00	2,631.00
	6411 - Service Program Donations	1,167.97	2,500.00	-1,332.03
	6412 - NSO Office Donations	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
	6413 - Service Income	0.00	15,000.00	-15,000.00
	6450 - VAVS Donations	37,714.75	14,000.00	23,714.75
	6480.2 - Donations to HSC by Cha	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6700 - Int. Earned	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6701 - Dividends on Investment	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6710 - Securities Income	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6720 - Unrealized Gain/Loss on Invest	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6750 - Realized Gain/Loss on Invest	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6760 - Gain/loss on sale	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6800 - Miscellaneous	35,406.49	5,000.00	30,406.49
	6901 - Reduction of Liability	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6990 - Preparing way Ministry	0.00	0.00	0.00
	80005.4 - Commanders Testimonial Inc	0.00	0.00	0.00
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>688,682.54</b>	<b>874,010.00</b>	<b>-185,327.46</b>
	<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>688,682.54</b>	<b>874,010.00</b>	<b>-185,327.46</b>
<b>Expense</b>				
	Printing & Publication-admin	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Testimonial Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00
	6 - JMC)-20 Prepaid Expense	0.00	0.00	0.00
	66900 - Reconciliation Discrepancies	0.00	0.00	0.00
	7000.2 - Convention Expense	15,431.62	16,500.00	-1,068.38
	7030.1 - Midwinter Expenses	17,836.58	19,000.00	-1,163.42
	7040.1 - Service Expenses	615,969.63	682,300.00	-66,330.37
	7570.1 - Legislative Expenses	3,432.98	3,900.00	-467.02
	8000.3 - VAVS Expenses	10,560.00	20,000.00	-9,440.00
	8260 - Headquarters Expense	45,401.08	131,310.00	-85,908.92
	8545 - chapter 30 trustee legal	0.00	0.00	0.00
	8562.2 - National Convention Expense	0.00	0.00	0.00
	9300.2 - Arcade Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00
	9400.1 - Orange Service Office Expense	0.00	0.00	0.00
	9410 - Organge City Property Write dow	0.00	0.00	0.00
	9450.1 - Lakeland Building expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00
	9470.2 - Sales expense Sarasota property	0.00	0.00	0.00
	9475.2 - Loss on Sale of Sarasota prop	0.00	0.00	0.00
	9500.1 - Foundation expenses	1,369.37	1,000.00	369.37
	<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>710,001.26</b>	<b>874,010.00</b>	<b>-164,008.74</b>
	<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-21,318.72</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-21,318.72</b>
<b>Other Income/Expense</b>				
<b>Other Income</b>				
	11001.4 - Testimonial Income	0.00	4,500.00	-4,500.00
	<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4,500.00</b>	<b>-4,500.00</b>
<b>Other Expense</b>				
	11000.4 - Testimonial Expenses 2015	5,073.50	4,500.00	573.50
	<b>Total Other Expense</b>	<b>5,073.50</b>	<b>4,500.00</b>	<b>573.50</b>
	<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>-5,073.50</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-5,073.50</b>
	<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-26,392.22</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-26,392.22</b>



**MEMBERSHIP  
FOR  
June 30, 2016**

Chanter	Last yr	trial	part life	full life	total	Goal	% goal	needed	chanter name 6/30/16	
001		1,923	7	176	1,721	1,904	1,757	97.95%	-36	JACKSONVILLE #1
002	G	10,503	1,574	909	8,268	10,751	8,182	101.05%	86	EVERGLADE STATE #2
004		2,544	2	157	2,405	2,564	2,429	99.01%	-24	JOHN C MCCARTHY II #4
005		572	0	65	516	581	532	96.99%	-16	THE TALLAHASSEE #5
006	G	271	1	29	261	291	259	100.77%	2	ST AUGUSTINE #6
007		748	1	246	599	846	683	87.70%	-84	W WASHINGTON #7
011	G	1,679	1	86	1,592	1,679	1,590	100.13%	2	CLEARWATER #11
012		1,472	1	104	1,390	1,495	1,405	98.93%	-15	CORAL GABLES #12
013	G	2,486	0	116	2,387	2,503	2,383	100.17%	4	BAY PINE HLDY ISL #13
014		310	0	23	292	315	294	99.32%	-2	JOHN D STROUD #14
016		2,765	1	207	2,566	2,774	2,593	98.96%	-27	CENTRAL #16
017	G	730	0	40	721	761	704	102.41%	17	PANAMA CITY #17
018		1,716	1	177	1,602	1,780	1,607	99.69%	-5	MANATEE COUNTY #18
020	G	348	0	23	333	356	333	100.00%	0	LAKE CITY #20
022	G	312	0	14	295	309	295	100.00%	0	JACKSON COUNTY #22
023		2,131	2	106	2,042	2,150	2,055	99.37%	-13	AL GRAY #23
029	G	592	1	53	562	616	558	100.72%	4	PEMBROKE PINES-MIRAMAR #29
030		1,305	0	111	1,190	1,301	1,195	99.58%	-5	SEMINOLE #30
032	G	1,351	2	96	1,260	1,358	1,244	101.29%	16	J L GOLIGHTLY #32
038		1,527	0	207	1,293	1,500	1,345	96.13%	-52	ORANGE PARK #38
042	G	1,818	0	92	1,742	1,834	1,738	100.23%	4	WEST PALM BEACH #42
049	G	313	0	23	299	322	288	103.82%	11	RIDGE #49
050	G	234	1	10	227	238	222	102.25%	5	CENTRAL BREVARD #50
057	G	431	1	30	411	442	401	102.49%	10	CRESTVIEW #57
063		166	0	8	156	164	157	99.36%	-1	TRI-COUNTY #63
065	G	542	0	35	518	553	512	101.17%	6	ZEPHYRHILLS #65
067		1,265	0	72	1,176	1,248	1,184	99.32%	-8	HERNANDO COUNTY #67
070		611	0	37	560	597	562	99.64%	-2	GERALD A SHONK #70
073	G	354	2	30	335	367	329	101.82%	6	TAMARAC #73
078	G	1,201	0	61	1,143	1,204	1,132	100.97%	11	NEW PORT RICHEY #78
082	G	1,094	0	62	1,058	1,120	1,048	100.95%	10	R L COCHRAN JR #82
083	G	958	2	149	891	1,042	887	100.45%	4	C W BYERS SR #83
084		1,325	3	64	1,215	1,282	1,219	99.67%	-4	GREATER DAYTONA #84
085		1,150	0	48	1,093	1,141	1,101	99.27%	-8	SOUTH MARION #85
086		605	0	69	562	631	566	99.29%	-4	JIM BOOE #86
087		740	1	39	717	757	701	102.28%	16	SGT WM E HILL #87
090		880	1	83	807	891	822	98.18%	-15	GATOR #90
094		1,069	0	42	1,017	1,059	1,017	100.00%	0	C GUSTAFSON #94
097		545	0	45	519	564	521	99.62%	-2	BEE RIDGE #97
098		242	0	13	229	242	230	99.57%	-1	EUCHEE VALLEY #98
101		796	0	46	763	809	763	100.00%	0	VENICE GULF #101
108		589	0	63	594	657	572	103.85%	22	JAMES D RADER #108
109		498	0	27	482	509	479	100.63%	3	TITUSVILLE #109
110		483	0	31	475	506	464	102.37%	11	SUN CITY CENTER #110
111		89	0	2	88	90	85	103.53%	3	PEACE RIVER #111
112		755	1	42	740	783	721	102.64%	19	BAY AREA #112
113		687	1	44	663	708	652	101.69%	11	PORT ST LUCIE #113
119		383	0	15	353	368	354	99.72%	-1	ANTHONY P DADDI #119
122		499	0	72	468	540	467	100.21%	1	MARATHON #122
123		620	0	19	618	637	600	103.00%	18	SPACE COAST #123
125		542	0	21	525	546	520	100.96%	5	CPL P D LYON JR #125
126		176	0	9	170	179	169	100.59%	1	SUWANNEE MEM #126
129		365	0	16	342	358	344	99.42%	-2	SO BREVARD BCHS #129
133		922	0	84	866	950	874	99.08%	-8	THE GOLD COAST #133
144		97	0	9	90	99	91	98.90%	-1	LA BELLE #144
148		803	2	83	747	832	753	99.20%	-6	AGNES M TAYLOR #148
150		788	0	34	906	940	835	108.50%	71	ORANGE BLOSSOM GDNS #150
152		692	0	40	668	708	658	101.52%	10	SOUTH PALM BEACH #152
155		369	0	13	354	367	351	100.85%	3	SEBASTIAN RIVER AREA #155
158		118	0	33	167	200	161	103.73%	6	CRYSTAL RIVER #158
159		0	0	20	0	20	0	0.00%	0	Miami Springs Chapter #159
Dept. Total		61,099	1,609	4,680	56,049	62,338	55,993	100.10%	56	



**Legislation  
FOR  
June 30, 2016**



# DAV<sup>®</sup> Resources

Dear DAV Leader,

As we prepare to update and enhance our new interactive Training, Research, Advocacy and Knowledge (iTRAK) system for National Service Officers' use serving veterans in the field, it is important that we all take note of other available resources so that we can all contribute to building a better DAV.

The Interim Women Veterans Committee worked diligently to develop a Women Veterans Toolkit that was released last July. This toolkit can help guide any department in developing or enhancing their own women veteran outreach and advocacy initiatives. The toolkit, along with DAV's groundbreaking report *Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home*, is available [here](#).

DAV's [YouTube channel](#) is also a highly valuable, yet underutilized resource. There's plenty to choose from, but the videos in the Veteran Disability Claims and Setting the Record Straight playlists are extremely valuable in explaining the current veteran landscape and disability claims process.

Lastly, please remind chapter leaders that recruiting new members is just the first step in sustained membership success. Mentoring these new members so they feel welcome and become contributors to our mission is key. The New Member Orientation Mentor Guide was developed to help chapters welcome their new members with open arms and inspire them to become part of the DAV family. The guide, along with several other tools, is available in the Members Only section of [DAV.org](#).

Remember, there are many resources available, including issue papers for several important issues on DAV's plate, on our website. Just click the Veterans tab in the top left corner and follow it to the Resources link.



### DD 214 Now on Line

DD 214 Now on LineIt's official; DD-214s are NOW Online. Please pass on to other vets. The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214s online: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov/> or try <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files.

Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents. Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site.

Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized.

The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time.

### Reminder

All financial disbursements of the chapter must be made by check. All checks must include the signature of at least two officers. **There should be no debit or credit utilized by the chapter.**

Source: National Chapter Officers Guide

### Florida DAV State Convention

The State Convention was held in Lake Mary, Florida on June 16-18, 2016. State officers elected/appointed were:

State Commander-----Jack Johnson  
Sr. Vice Commander-----Frank Chicollo  
Jr Vice Commander-----Brad Bouter  
Judge Advocate-----John Markiewicz  
Finance Committee-4yr member-Art Wilson  
Finance Committee-1yr.member-Brian Moore  
Area 2 Executive-----Harold Holloway  
Area 2 Alt. Executive-----Pat Brennan  
Area 4 Executive-----Roger Powell  
Area 4 Alt. Executive-----Walt Cyr  
Adjutant-----Albert Linden  
State Inspector-----Wally Tyson

The convention was attended by over 100 delegate who passed a ;budget for the year 2016-17.

### Andy Marshall Announces for National Office

Andy Marshall is retiring as National Service Officer in February 2016 and it was announce at the Florida DAV Mid-Winter conference that he will be running for National Office at the upcoming National Convention. Andy has over 40 years as a National Service Officer and is well respected leader of veterans. Any donations for the Committee to Elect Andy Marshall for National office should be sent to:

Dan Anderson  
3449 Fairchild Trail  
Clearwater Florida, 33761

## **VA Caregivers**

***Accept that you are doing the best you can.*** Understand that you do not need to be a “perfect caregiver.” Give yourself credit, not guilt.

***Recognize what you can and cannot change.*** You may not be able to change the behavior of your loved one, however, you can control the way in which you respond.

***Set realistic goals for small accomplishments.***

***Establish a daily routine.***

***Keep in touch with friends and family.***

***Join a support group*** for caregivers of patients with Alzheimer’s disease or related disorders.

***Set a time each week to do something for YOU!*** Go to a movie, go shopping, go out to lunch with a friend, play tennis or play cards. Accept that you deserve breaks. Keep up with your hobbies and interests.

***Try to get physical exercise:*** Take a 20-30 minute walk a few times a week. Exercise at home.

***Eat healthy foods.***

***Keep up with your medical and dental checkups.***

***Learn or update caregiving skills.*** Becoming well-informed about the disease is helpful in coping with its related physical and emotional symptoms and managing it for the long-term.

***Access additional services,*** if appropriate. For instance, can your loved one attend Adult Day Care – even just one day per week? Look into respite care (short-term care where your loved one stays in a facility temporarily to give you time to rest, travel or attend to other things). Explore home health care services. Getting help with basic tasks like housekeeping, shopping, or other errands can help you provide more focused care for your loved one.

***If you work outside the home, consider taking some time off.*** The federal “Family and Medical Leave Act” may permit up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year to care for relatives. Consult your employer’s Human Resources department for details.

### ***Caregivers of eligible Veterans of all eras may qualify for:***

- Skilled nursing
- Home health aide
- Home Based Primary Care
- Medical equipment
- Home modification
- Vehicle modification
- Aid & Attendance
- Support groups
- Up to 30 days of respite care per year
- Education and training on caregiving

Each VA medical center has a VA Caregiver Support Program and VA Caregiver Coordinator. The program was developed to support Caregivers of Veterans to help ensure the best care for our Veterans. The program provides a wide range of services to Caregivers of eligible Veterans of all eras. Your local Caregiver Support Coordinator can coordinate training, connect you to resources within the VA and your local community, and

***[www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)***

***VA’s Caregiver Support Line***

***toll-free: 1-855-260-3274***

Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. ET

Saturday, 10:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. ET

## National Staff Appointment Of Shane Liermann

With the approval of National Commander Moses A. McIntosh Jr., I am pleased to announce the appointment of Shane L. Liermann to the **position of Assistant National Service Director**.

Mr. Liermann, who served as Assistant Supervisor of our National Appeals Office at the Board of Veterans Appeals prior to his current appointment, brings nearly two decades of service experience as a member of DAV's professional staff. He was appointed to his current position on June 20, 2016.

A Life Member of Arlington-Fairfax Chapter 10, Virginia, Mr. Liermann served in the United States Marine Corps as a field radio operator from 1993 to 1996.

Mr. Liermann began his DAV career in October 1998 at the NSO Training Academy and following graduation was assigned to the Denver, Colorado National Service Office. He was promoted to Assistant Supervisor of the Denver office in April 2003 before relocating to the Cleveland, Ohio National Service Office in February 2004. Mr. Liermann was then promoted to Supervisor of the National Service Office in Ft. Snelling, Minn., in August 2006, and to the Nashville, Tennessee office in June 2009. In May 2011, Mr. Liermann was promoted to Assistant Supervisor of DAV's National Appeals Office at the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C., until his current appointment.

Mr. Lierman will assist in overseeing DAV service operations in over 100 offices and we are grateful to have him assume this important responsibility at a critical time in our organization's evolution

## National Staff

With the approval of National Commander Moses A. McIntosh Jr., I am pleased to announce the appointment of James W. Killen to the position of Associate National Director of Communications effective June 13.

A Marine Corps veteran, Mr. Killen served with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 365 from 2001 to 2006, and is presently serving with the Kentucky Air National Guard, 123<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing Division.

A native of Fort Knox, Ky., Mr. Killen earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Louisville, majoring in Law and Public Policy with a minor in Communication. He also received a Certificate of Applied Postive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania; attended the Public Affairs Qualification Course and Electronic Journalism Course at Defense Information School.

Mr. Killen has previously worked in the Public Affairs Office for the Kentucky Air National Guard; as a member of the Department of Veterans Affairs Digital Media Team; and as an Army Community Service Mobilization and Deployment Specialist.

In accepting this appointment, Mr. Killen will be responsible for enacting communication strategies on DAV's social media platforms and other print and digital media. We wish him the very best as he takes on this important and challenging task at a critical juncture when our united voice is needed to determine the future of the healthcare and benefits we've earned.

Dear Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of the millions of veterans we represent, and all veterans who use the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system, we write to express our grave concerns about the discussion draft legislation publicly released by your office earlier this month. The draft legislation is predicated on several flawed premises and, if enacted, would have immediate and permanent negative consequences for millions of veterans who choose and rely on VA health care.

As you are aware, over the past two years the VA health care system has faced its most critical challenge in a generation. Media revelations of veterans waiting too long for care and flagrant scheduling manipulations led to the resignation of a VA Secretary and passage of emergency legislation to expand access to non-VA care through a new and temporary choice program. We supported that legislation and many other necessary reforms since, but what many forget is that the crisis was not over the quality of care, but rather the ability of veterans to access that care in a timely manner. With the temporary choice program nearing the end of its authorization next year, Congress and a new President will have to make critical decisions about the future of the VA health care system, the use of community care and the role of choice.

Unfortunately, the draft legislation you proposed rests on three false premises: that VA provides lower quality health care than the private sector, that VA has not changed or improved over the past two years, and that most veterans prefer care in the private sector. As a result, it fails to address the root causes of the access problems, and instead proposes to radically alter and shrink the VA health care system in a way that could result in worse health care outcomes for millions of veterans.

First, there is overwhelming scientific consensus – including an authoritative Independent Assessment by Rand Corporation mandated by Congress and completed last year – confirming that the overall quality of care at VA is as good as, and often better than private care. In April, the American Psychological Association reported that as measured by objective standards of mental health care treatment, “VA performance was superior to that of the private sector by more than 30%.” In another report by Rand on the readiness and cultural competency of civilian mental health providers to treat veterans, they found that, “...only 13 percent of surveyed civilian providers met all the readiness criteria.” In addition, there are dozens of other peer-reviewed studies of patient health and safety that confirm what we and most veterans who use the system can tell you from personal experience: VA provides high quality care. The critical problem is and has long been that too many veterans have difficulty accessing that care due to inadequate capacity at VA facilities or inaccessible geographic location, particularly for rural and remote veterans.

Second, over the past two years VA has made significant progress to expand access and begun major reforms that could transform the entire system. For example, VA completed over 57 million appointments between March 2015 and March 2016, 1.6 million more than the prior year. VA also provided 20 million additional hours of care for veterans, a 10% increase as measured by private sector standards. During this same time period, VA and its Choice contractors created more than 3 million authorizations for private sector care, a 12-percent increase in one year. In the past two years VA has undergone wholesale leadership changes at every level and in virtually every program office. VA has also begun implementation of an agency-wide culture transformation – called MyVA – to ensure that all veterans have a positive experience that meets their needs, expectations and desires. There is still much more to be done, but VA, with aggressive oversight and input from Congress and VSO stakeholders, is on the right path.

Third, as every major veterans service organization will confirm, veterans who actually use the VA health care system overwhelmingly want to see it fixed and reformed, not downsized or dismantled. The American Legion through its System Worth Saving program, which has professionally evaluated VA medical care all across the United States for over a decade, finds that veterans on the whole prefer VA health care; that VA's hospital operations are providing world-class health care to enrolled veterans who say they are consistently satisfied with the quality of care they receive and the relationships they develop with their care teams. The VFW has done extensive surveying of its large membership showing that veterans choose to use VA care because they like the quality of care they receive, believe it's an earned benefit and because VA is best suited to care for their veteran-specific needs. Furthermore, they found that 87 percent of veterans who receive VA care would recommend it to their fellow veterans. In April, DAV asked its members and supporters who use VA to share their experiences. In less than a week, DAV heard from over 4,000 veterans, more than 80% of whom said their overall experience was positive. A bipartisan survey released last Veterans' Day found that regardless of political party, a strong majority of veterans want to continue using the VA health care system, do not want it privatized and do not want to turn it into an insurance program. While not all veterans choose to enroll in VA, among those who do use VA care, it's clear the overwhelming majority prefer to stay in the VA system.

Unfortunately, the draft legislation, which closely mirrors recommendations from a Concerned Veterans for America (CVA) report, is built on the false assumption that veterans would be better off in the private sector. A core premise of the legislation is that VA will be smaller in the future which would require thousands – if not millions – of veterans being moved into private sector systems that already face their own access problems. Further, the private sector is ill-equipped to provide the specialized care so many veterans need, such as for spinal cord injury, prosthetics, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health care.

The draft legislation would divide VA's provider and payor functions by creating a new federal health insurance program for veterans – with thousands of pages of new federal regulations – resulting in less coordinated care for millions of veterans who would have no choice but to split their care between one or more health systems. The draft legislation proposes paying for expanded choice by shifting the cost onto veterans themselves through new insurance premiums and potentially higher co-payments and deductibles. If enacted, this legislation would, over time, close hundreds of VA hospitals and clinics, and reduce or eliminate many health care services in hundreds of other facilities, leaving millions of veterans – particularly those who need VA's specialized services – without access to the full continuum of care offered by VA today. Finally, the draft legislation would move VA health care out of VA and create an independent and unaccountable corporate entity to run the new system, driven by financial concerns, further weakening the coordinated delivery of benefits and services to veterans.

We believe there is a better way to expand access to high-quality, veteran-focused care by creating local high-performing health care networks that seamlessly integrate the best of community care into the VA system. Under our vision, VA would remain the coordinator and primary provider of care, but sufficient new community care options would be identified and integrated into local networks to provide veterans with real options for timely and convenient care, whenever and wherever VA has gaps.

As you may know, Public Law 114-41 mandated that VA develop a plan to consolidate existing community care programs into a single new choice program. The VA plan presented to Congress earlier this year, which we were involved in developing, proposed creating similar high-performing networks that would integrate the best of private care into the VA system in order to prevent gaps in access. Members of both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees were very supportive of this plan and House Chairman Jeff Miller and Senate Chairman Johnny Isakson recently introduced separate legislation to move key elements of the VA plan forward. We continue to work with both Committees, as well as VA Secretary McDonald, to strengthen and improve the legislation and to enact it this year. We hope to have your support.

Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers, the future of the VA health care system is at a critical juncture, one that will have long-term consequences for America's veterans. We hope you will carefully consider our concerns about your draft legislation and be willing to work with us to find common ground so that we can keep the promise to all of the men and women who wore the uniform in defense of our freedom, particularly those who are injured and ill.

Respectfully,

Garry Augustine	Executive Director Washington Headquarters	DAV (Disabled American Veterans)
Verna L. Jones	Executive Director	The American Legion
Robert E. Wallace	Executive Director	Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Sherman Gillums, Jr.	Executive Director	Paralyzed Veterans of America
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Ernesto P. Hernandez III	National Adjutant	Military Order of the Purple Heart
Rick Weidman	Executive Director for Policy and Government Affairs	Vietnam Veterans of America
Joseph R. Chenelly	Executive Director	AMVETS
John R. Davis	Director, Legislative Programs	Fleet Reserve Association
Randy Reid	Executive Director	U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
Herb Rosenbleeth	National Executive Director	Jewish War Veterans of the USA
Richard A. Jones	Legislative Director	National Association for Uniformed Services
James T. (Jim) Currie, Ph.D.	Colonel, USA (Ret.), Executive Director	Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
John Ostrowski	Senior Chief, USCGR, Retired, Director, Government Affairs	Non Commissioned Officers Association
Bonnie Carroll	President and Founder	Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

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