



# NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS  
OF THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS  
DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK

Volume 18 Number 2

August 2009

## OFF TO A GOOD START

*Leo Ortiz, Department Commander*

What a great start! It was great to see such a super turnout for the rehab cruise. As usual, it was fun meeting our members, families and friends. What a ride!

Then it was off to Cincinnati, Ohio for our C & A Conference. Three days of learning about membership, leadership and strategy.

As we all know, membership is crucial to any organization. Leadership, we must all get involved to insure the future of the DAV. We are fortunate to have strong men and women leading our organization. Strategy, a plan to evaluate strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

I was privileged to attend a Welcome Home Celebration in my backyard for returning Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans. The event was sponsored by my local VAMC. Over 700 veterans and their families attended. I was honored to be present to shake their hands and welcome them home.

I will be visiting the VAMC's next month. I hope to have the opportunity to see and speak with some of you.

## MARXIST EUPHORIA

*Sidney Siller, Sr., PDC; Department Adjutant*

Eighty-eight is not just the number referring to the keys on a piano or to a birthday of a specific octogenarian, but rather to the number of years since the Disabled American Veterans was founded.

I guess, by this time in my own DAV adventure, many of you realize that I am an unabashed "Marxist." That is to say, I subscribe to the principles and mission of the Disabled American Veterans that our founder PNC Judge Robert Marx expounded. He was a man of extraordinary courage, intelligence and foresight. His leadership was key.

After 88 years, I think it's become more and more obvious that the DAV has become endeared in the hearts and minds of our fellow Americans. So much so, that I believe that our enshrinement in our fellow countrymen's hearts and our culture, that we can proudly say that the Disabled American Veterans are now institutionalized. We have established by setting in motion a serious and devoted service organization that promotes the public good for those disabled by their service connected disabilities and their widows and orphans.

Nationally, the implantation of the Disabled for Life Memorial will further extend our mission in the culture of American History. We should expect an announcement of the dedication to take place within a year.

Continuing this saga on the state level, I can tell you with great pride, that we are making great strides in developing our new Headquarters in Lynbrook, LI, New York. We now have a Headquarters that we can

### Membership Status as of 8/13/09

Trial Members: 2,256

Part Life Members: 2,206

Full Life Members: 46,338

Total Members: 50,800

Goal for Full Life Members: 46,915 (98.77%)

*Continued on page 2*

## **SECRETARY SHINESKI ANNOUNCES EXPANSION IN ALBANY**

*VA Press Release*

WASHINGTON, Aug 21 – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced a plan to expand health care in Albany, N.Y., by leasing 2.4 acres to a private-sector medical facility in exchange for construction of a 30,000 square-foot building for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at its Samuel S. Stratton VA Medical Center.

“This is a win-win situation for Veterans and for the community,” said Secretary Shinseki. “As we modernize VA moving toward a 21st century organization, we will continue to look for collaboration opportunities to play an important role in expanding services for Veterans.”

The new building, to be used by VA for administrative functions and training, will free up space for Veterans' clinical services elsewhere on the campus. Meanwhile, the VA-affiliated Albany Medical Center will use the leased federal land to build a needed parking garage to serve the larger community with a potential for retail use in some of the space.

VA's Samuel S. Stratton Medical Center serves Veterans in 22 counties of upstate New York, western Massachusetts and Vermont. It provides primary care, wellness and preventive outpatient care, and the full range of inpatient medical care, including specialty services.

all actually be proud of, a place that exudes class and responsibility. As one of our units said, “I won't be ashamed to have anyone meet me at Headquarters anymore since we know look like a legitimate organization.” Not that we were illegitimate, but I do understand what he meant. An office in an apartment house is just not suitable for Disabled American Veterans Department of New York.

A proper Headquarters adds stature to us as individuals and cumulatively to the Disabled American Veterans. Just as the National Department has become an institution like the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, the Department of New York with its' new Headquarters is on the verge of becoming a New York State institution with our progress in having our own Headquarters. So, in the end, I guess it was inevitable that I became a “Marxist.”

E.N. Please make a note that the Dedication of our New Headquarters Building will take place on Saturday, December 19th, 2009, 162 Atlantic Avenue, Lynbrook, NY; at ten am, followed by the Department's Holiday Party at the VFW Hall at 235 Merrick Road at 1:00 pm (by invitation only).

## **DSO COVERAGE BEGINS AT THE ROCHESTER OUTPATIENT CLINIC**

*Robert Dolan, DSO Executive Director*

Effective on July 27, 2009, Department Service Officers (DSO's) will be available everyday at the Rochester Outpatient Treatment Clinic, Room 221 at 465 Westfall Road in Rochester, New York. They can also be reached by telephone at (585) 463-2741.

The DSO's who will be available for answering inquires and in assisting those wishing to file claims with the VA includes Gordon Williams, Richard Robinson and PDC Ronald Tears.

The DSO hours at the Rochester OPC are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Fridays from 9am until 3pm. After Labor Day, the office will also be open on Wednesdays.

### **DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

Department of New York

**Leo Ortiz, Commander**

**Sidney Siller, Adjutant**

162 Atlantic Ave., Lynbrook, NY 11563-3599

516-887-7100 • Fax 516-887-7175

davny@optonline.net • <http://www.davny.org>

## LETTER TO THE DAV FROM SENATOR SCHUMER

Dear Veteran:

Knowing of your commitment to this country and to honoring all servicemen and women who have served us so bravely, I am writing to share some exciting news. On July 1, 2009, President Obama signed Public Law 111-40, authorizing the award of the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor to the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II.

As you may know, the WASP's were the first women in history to fly America's military aircraft, flying over sixty million miles in every type of aircraft and on almost every type of mission. These women took the military oath and were promised military status when they entered training, but they were never actually afforded active duty military status and were never commissioned. As a result, they never received honors or recognition for their service to this country.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest and most distinguished award that Congress can bestow on civilians, and it is important that the United States honor the service of the Women Airforce Service Pilots. To that effect, Congress has set plans in motion to stage a ceremony in Washington, D.C., to give these service women the public honor they deserve. Roughly one third of the 1,000 women who received their WASP wings are still alive, and it is our goal to honor these brave women as expeditiously as possible.

I hope you will join me in honoring the service of the Women Airforce Service Pilots, and I thank you for your service to this country. Please do not hesitate to contact me about this or any other matter, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on these and other critical issues.

Sincerely,  
Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator

## DISABLED VETERANS' CAREGIVER SUPPORT BILL APPLAUDED

*DAV Press Release, Dated July 21, 2009*

WASHINGTON, July 28—The Disabled American

Veterans (DAV) today praised the House of Representatives for standing up for disabled veterans and their family caregivers by overwhelmingly approving the Caregiver Assistance and Resource Enhancement Act.

The measure, H.R. 3155, would greatly expand the level of support services provided to family and non-family caregivers of severely wounded and disabled veterans, including specialized training and monthly cash stipends to eligible family caregivers. The bill also would provide one-stop access to support services via the Internet and make counseling, mental health services and medical care available to family and non-family caregivers of veterans.

“The types of injuries that veterans sustain, particularly those from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, are in many cases so severe that family members put their lives on hold to care for their loved ones,” said DAV National Commander Raymond E. Dempsey. “As a result, the families of severely injured service-members often face extreme financial and emotional hardships as they help their wounded sons, daughters, husbands and wives. We owe these families the support they need to care for our disabled veterans which means increased federal assistance, including direct financial support.”

Sponsored by Rep. Michael Michaud (D-Maine) with bipartisan support, H.R. 3155 addresses one of the most pressing problems faced by those caring for loved ones injured in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Once a disabled veteran returns home, a family member often assumes the role of caregiver and provides crucial support, often at the expense of their own education, job and health. It is widely recognized that informal caregiving can enhance the quality of life of the recipient and delay or prevent a veteran from being institutionalized. These caregivers take on the responsibilities of caring for our nation's disabled veterans that otherwise would fall to the federal government.

“Unfortunately, family caregivers today do not receive sufficient support services or any direct financial assistance from the government. What is needed is an array of support services such as respite care, financial compensation, vocational counseling, basic health care, relationship, marriage and family counseling, and mental health care. All of these services are essential to equip caregivers with the tools they need to help care for disabled veterans,” said Dempsey.

Earlier this year, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved legislation, S. 801, which would provide caregivers with expanded assistance, including direct financial support. Importantly, the Senate caregiver legislation also contained language that could open the door to providing expanded caregiver services to all veterans, whereas the House bill is limited to only those injured on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

"Both the House and Senate have taken historic steps to help solve the problems faced by caregivers of disabled veterans," said Dempsey. "Now it is time for Congress to stand up for veterans by working out the differences in their caregiver bills and sending a final version of the legislation to President Obama to sign this year," he said.

## **DAV URGES PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION FOR HEART DISEASE AND PARKINSON'S IN VIETNAM VETERANS**

*VA Press Release*

WASHINGTON, July 30—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is urging the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to add ischemic heart disease and Parkinson's disease to the list of disabilities presumed to be linked to herbicides and Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War.

In a letter to Secretary Eric K. Shinseki, DAV National Commander Raymond E. Dempsey urged a presumption of service connection be granted to Vietnam veterans who suffer from ischemic heart disease and Parkinson's. As other diseases with the presumption of service connection, veterans suffering from exposure to Agent Orange would be immediately eligible to receive VA health care and disability compensation benefits for those conditions.

A new Institute of Medicine (IOM) study found that exposure to high levels of chemical herbicides used in Vietnam could increase the risk of ischemic heart disease, a condition involving reduced blood supply to the heart. Other factors can also play a

role, the report said, but researchers found that veterans exposed to the chemicals may be at greater risk. The study also said that a review of 16 related studies found there may be a relationship between Parkinson's disease and Agent Orange exposure.

"Waiting would only serve to deny health care and other benefits to many veterans," said Commander Dempsey. "The IOM report suggests that there are indications that herbicides used during the Vietnam War is associated with the increased chance of the illnesses. "The DAV supports granting presumption of service connection effective immediately in order to render care to veterans who are suffering from heart disease and Parkinson's as a result of their service to our nation in Vietnam."

The IOM said a preponderance of evidence and biologic data are beginning to show how herbicides can cause increased risk of the toxic effect of ischemic heart disease among veterans. It's finding of "suggestive evidence of an association" means that there could be a link between herbicide exposure and increased risk for ischemic heart disease and Parkinson's. Following similar IOM findings for other conditions, the VA granted presumptive service connection for veterans exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

"We appreciated the diligence of the IOM and the VA in continuing to seek out information that can lead to better health care for our veterans," said Commander Dempsey. "It is imperative that our veterans receive the timely health care that they have earned in service to our country."

## **DAV APPLAUDS PROTECTIONS FOR VETERANS IN HEALTH REFORM BILL**

*DAV Press Release*

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) today applauded adoption of two amendments to health care reform legislation that would protect veterans' health care choices. The amendments to the America's Affordable Health Choices Act (H.R. 3200) being drafted by the House Energy and Commerce Committee came in response to a July 31 letter from DAV and other veterans organizations to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) outlining their "grave concerns" that the

measure could limit health care choices for veterans, increase their costs, deny coverage to their dependents and threaten the quality of care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system.

“Unfortunately, H.R. 3200, as initially drafted, fails to recognize, protect and preserve the Veterans Health Administration's medical care service for our nation's 24 million veterans,” said DAV National Commander Raymond E. Dempsey. “Any national health care reform legislation must make certain all veterans, including those enrolled in VA health care, remain eligible to enroll in any exchange-participating health benefits plan offered under H.R. 3200 through the Health Insurance Exchange, or in any other public or cooperative health insurance program.”

One amendment, offered by Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.), Ranking Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, would allow veterans receiving VA health care to also enroll in a plan through the bill's proposed Health to obtain additional coverage for themselves and their dependents if they desired. The second Buyer amendment would make clear that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs retains full authority to operate the VA health care system without interference from any new organizations, agencies or commissions established by the legislation.

Both amendments were adopted by voice vote. That achieves three of the four goals set forth in the letter sent to Speaker Pelosi last week.

A third amendment also proposed by Rep. Buyer aimed to ensure veterans in the VA health care system would not be subject to a tax for uninsured or underinsured individuals. The amendment met with opposition from committee members and was withdrawn, but only after Buyer first secured a pledge from Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) that he would seek support for the Rules Committee to allow such an amendment to be introduced on the House floor.

“I applaud Representative Buyer for moving so quickly to amend this legislation in defense of veterans and their families,” Dempsey said. “His amendments and bipartisan support from Chairman Waxman are big steps in the right direction. But until that floor amendment is made, our concerns are not fully resolved.”

As the bill continues through the legislative process, the DAV will continue to closely monitor the process.

“The DAV will continue to do more analysis of this voluminous bill, not to mention future versions, before we can have true assurance that veterans are protected,”

Dempsey said. “But for now, we are pleased lawmakers are willing to make the fixes necessary to protect those who sacrificed to protect us.”

## **SECRETARY SHINSEKI MOVES TO SIMPLIFY PTSD COMPENSATION RULES**

*VA Press Release*

WASHINGTON, Aug 24 - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking steps to assist Veterans seeking compensation for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

"The hidden wounds of war are being addressed vigorously and comprehensively by this administration as we move VA forward in its transformation to the 21st century," said Secretary Shinseki.

The VA is publishing a proposed regulation today in the Federal Register to make it easier for a Veteran to claim service connection for PTSD by reducing the evidence needed if the stressor claimed by a Veteran is related to fear of hostile military or terrorist activity. Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 60 days. A final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

Under the new rule, VA would not require corroboration of a stressor related to fear of hostile military or terrorist activity if a VA psychiatrist or psychologist confirms that the stressful experience recalled by a Veteran adequately supports a diagnosis of PTSD and the Veteran's symptoms are related to the claimed stressor.

Previously, claims adjudicators were required to corroborate that a non-combat Veteran actually experienced a stressor related to hostile military activity. This rule would simplify the development that is required for these cases.

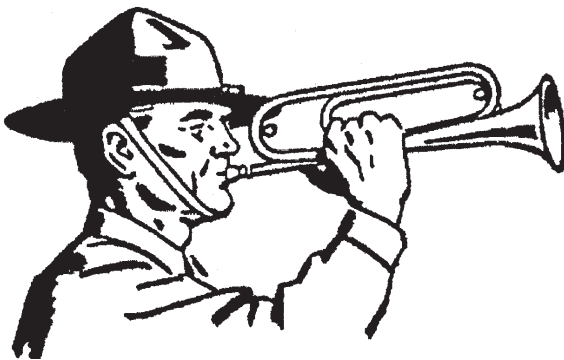
PTSD is a recognized anxiety disorder that can follow seeing or experiencing an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury to which a person responds with intense fear, helplessness or horror, and is not uncommon in war.

Feelings of fear, confusion or anger often subside, but if the feelings don't go away or get worse, a Veteran may have PTSD.

VA is bolstering its mental health capacity to serve combat Veterans, adding thousands of new professionals to its rolls in the last four years. The Department also has established a suicide prevention helpline (1-800-273-TALK) and Web site available for online chat in the evenings at [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans).

## CHAPTER OFFICERS - PLEASE TAKE NOTICE

Please take care when filling out the Chapter Officer Report and the Chapter Recommendation For Committees Form. Make sure the names and addresses are legible. Do not forget to include the correct zip codes.



## TAPS

Department has been notified that the following comrades have been called into final formation above:

**E. Daniel Pericles**

Chapter #144, April 15, 2009

**Richard J. Dietz**

Chapter #39, May 14, 2009

**John F. Perry**

Chapter #200, May 20 2009

**Roy C. Parker**

Chapter #200, July 16, 2009

**Harold L. Bailey**

Chapter #200

Department and the membership extend deepest sympathies to the family members, friends and comrades of these fallen heroes. May each one rest in honor.

Please feel free to call, write or e-mail [davny@optonline.net](mailto:davny@optonline.net) Headquarters if you have a loss in your Chapter that you would like to include in this column.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### **2010 National Mid Winter Conference**

February 28, 2010 to March 3, 2010

Crystal Gateway Marriott

1700 Jefferson Davis Highway

Arlington, VA 22202

703-920-3230

\$189.00 Single/Double Occupancy

### **2010 National DAV Convention**

July 31, 2010 to August 3, 2010

Hyatt Regency Atlanta on Peachtree  
Street

265 Peachtree Street NE

Atlanta, GA 30303

404-577-1234

\$129.00 Single/Double Occupancy