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**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK, INC.  
200 Atlantic Avenue, Lynbrook, New York 11563



**March 2008 Newsletter**

## **DAV SPEAKS TO THE NATION!**

*Theodore A. Barbuto, Department  
Commander*

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***“America is best described by one  
word, freedom.”***

***~Dwight David Eisenhower~***

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In what other country do Veterans activists groups have the freedom to address Congress about issues that are of concern to them. Only in America! I had the honor and privilege of attending the Mid-Winter conference in Washington, D.C. along with our New York delegation and veterans from across the United States. We wore pins which made two statements, “Stand up for Veterans” and more important to our legislators, “I’m a Disabled Veteran and I Vote!”

Many workshops were well attended, including a Benefits Protection Team Meeting/Legislative Workshop headed by National Legislative Director, Joseph Violante. Other offerings to attendees were a VA Health Fair, Service, VAVS, Membership and Adjutants Workshops as well as a Communications Seminar. The

Communications seminar taught how to have Chapters, Departments and DAV Members advocate the “Stand Up for Veterans” initiative by educating policy makers and the general public to support the need to fully fund veterans medical care and as well as to meet the continuing needs of veterans and their families.

Our first annual Congressional Breakfast was a success and was attended by the Northeastern states as well as some of our Congressional leaders. As New York is always a frontrunner in new innovations we were there to format, to implement and to attend this momentous first. We look forward to an even larger attendance next year.

National Commander Robert Reynolds addressed Congress with the “Presentation of the DAV’s 2008 Legislative Program” on Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. He expressed the concerns and expectations for all Disabled American Veterans and gave a speech on our behalf that we should all applaud him for. He let Congress know that they as our representatives have an obligation to uphold promises to our veterans and families that have been earned through acts of courage and valor. He reminded them that the



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government has a moral obligation to fulfill the needs of all servicepersons who have given freely of themselves in defense of this great nation of ours. I would like to call attention to an honorable quote from National Commander Reynolds address to Congress, ***"The citizens and government of a country that sends its young men and women to defend its homeland and fight its wars have a strong moral obligation to repay***

It was the plan of DAV-NY to gain broad support for our National Legislative Program on the day that our National Commander testified before the Joint Committee on Veteran's Affairs of the House and Senate on March 4, 2008.

With the support of Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont and the District of Columbia we sold out entire "HC5" room in our historic and beautiful Capital.

One-hundred-twenty men and women members joined in what could become a stronger plank in DAV's legislative armor to fulfill our vitally important mission. National Director Joe Violante was very strong in his

***them for bearing such a heavy burden."***

**~Robert T. Reynolds, Disabled American Veterans, March 4, 2008 ~**

I look forward to seeing you for our March SEC in Kerhonkson, New York, March 28, 2008 to March 30, 2008.

#### **CAPITAL BREAKFAST "REDUX"**

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

statement of our case for the advancement of veterans benefits.

Two strong US Representatives visited us and spent several hours explaining their support for disabled veterans. Congressman Chris Shea of Connecticut in his shirt sleeves lead a group of us onto the floor of the House. We hear that Jr. Vice Commander Sam Mantilla took the opportunity to sit in the Speaker's Chair. Fortunately for him Speaker Pelosi was not in her chair. Congressman Hall sat with his friends from New York, and later mentioned the NorthEast Breakfast during the National Commander's testimony during the hearing - what a day. Especially when we were in the packed hearing room and we heard the ringing words of common sense and reason for DAV's



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program by National Commander Rob Reynolds.

What all of this means is that the idea works well, but one must do better as a team of states from the NorthEast.

What we should do, now that we have our first success:

1. Get a larger room on Capitol Hill.
2. Get a bigger turnout of Senators and Representatives.
3. And continue our support for our National Programs like it is life or death.

WASHINGTON (February 28, 2008) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is designating \$37 million to fund at least 2,250 new transitional housing beds by giving grants to local providers.

"This is the largest one-time designation of funds for the homeless program in VA's history," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "This is a great opportunity for community organizations to join VA in its mission of eradicating chronic homelessness among veterans." The grants are intended to offset the operating expenses for transitional housing facilities operated by state and local governments, Indian tribal governments, and faith-based and community-based organizations that are

As we repeat this program our effectiveness will grow and gain momentum.

My thanks to all of you for supporting New York's plan - and our success belongs to all of those who were present. Many kudos and let's "Redux."

### **VA TAPS \$37 MILLION FOR HOMELESS GRANTS**

#### ***Peake: Applications Being Accepted from Local Providers***

capable of providing supported housing and supportive services for homeless veterans. VA began its national effort to eradicate chronic homelessness 20 years ago by providing \$5 million for a pilot program to support contract residential care and to create domiciliary care for homeless veterans in San Diego. Today, VA supports more than 15,000 beds in transitional housing facilities or in VA residential treatment programs nationwide. The Department is the largest federal provider of direct assistance to the homeless, including outreach and case management, treatment, rehabilitation, transitional residential care, therapeutic work and assistance with permanent housing. As part of its homelessness programs, VA



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also supports special programs for the treatment and rehabilitation of those suffering from mental illness and addictive disorders.

#### **NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETS DROPS 21 PERCENT**

##### ***Peake Selected to Chair Federal Homeless Task Force***

WASHINGTON (March 6, 2008) - The number of veterans homeless on a typical night has declined 21 percent in the past year, thanks to the services offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and its partners in community- and faith-based organizations, plus changing demographics and improvements in survey techniques. The reduction of homeless veterans from more than 195,000 to about 154,000 was announced as Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake was elected to chair the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Peake's election to head the council coordinating the federal response to homelessness came as VA released the fourteenth annual Community Homeless Assessment, Local Education and Networking Group (CHALENG) report on homeless veterans. "We are seeing significant progress in the fight against homelessness," said Peake. "This success should encourage all those concerned about homeless veterans, for

it shows we can make a difference in the lives of these veterans through our services and with our community partners." The decline in veterans' homelessness was attributed, in part, to VA's success in providing more services for homeless veterans and improved coordination of federal, state and local efforts. VA provides health care to about 100,000 homeless veterans, and compensation and pensions to nearly 40,000 annually. The Department offers homeless veterans employment assistance and help obtaining foreclosed homes and excess federal property, including clothes, footwear, blankets and other items. The Department has already approved funding for more than 12,000 beds in transitional housing programs, and provides about 5,000 veterans each year with residential services in VA hospital-based programs. Other factors in the decline of homeless veterans include the substantial reduction in the number of poor veterans -- from 3 million in 1990 to 1.8 million in 2000 -- and improvements in counting homeless people. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness is the coordinating entity within the federal government composed of 20 cabinet secretaries and agency heads that creates partnerships at every level of government and the private sector to end homelessness.



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## BUFFALO'S DAV DAY AT THE BALLPARK

*Bryan Held, NSO Supervisor Buffalo*

With spring right around the corner, who can't help but imagine the warm sun on your face, the smell of hot dogs, hamburgers, and the excitement of Baseball season. This year the Disabled American Veterans and the Buffalo Bisons (Cleveland Indians farm team) will come together and celebrate "DAV Day at the Ballpark". Together we can make this day a success and bring smiles to all disabled veterans and their families.

Departments and Chapters are taking wounded veterans, patients of the VA medical centers and their own families out to the ball game as part of the "DAV Day at the Ballpark" program. In the July/August 2006 DAV magazine, Past National Commander Paul W. Jackson stated, "Wounded veterans and patients from VA medical centers are the guests of our Chapters and Departments at all our ball games. We get them out to the game, and they enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of baseball at Major League and minor league stadiums."

It is with PNC Jackson's enthusiasm that I bring to your attention the details of Buffalo's first "DAV Day at the Ballpark."

**DATE:** June 29, 2008 - Dunn Tire Park, Buffalo, New York.

**FOOD TIME:** 11 AM will start the 2-hour buffet in the center field party tent.

**GAME TIME:** 1:05 PM

**OPPONENT:** NY Yankees triple A team, Scranton Wilkes-Barre

**PRICE:** For the first 500 tickets it is just \$20.00. Thereafter it is \$22.00 a ticket. You'll get all you can eat and drink for 2 hours prior to the game. This includes hot dogs, hamburgers, all condiments, potato salad, chef salad, chips and soda. (BUFFET STYLE)

**PARKING:** Private vehicles will be the responsibility of the owner. DAV vans will be parked by the Buffalo Bisons, close to the center field party tent. Our VAMC patients/veterans will be staged near the center field tent until it opens at 11 AM for the buffet.

**Ticket \$\$:** I will need all of your ticket money as early as possible but "no later than May 1, 2008". This will allow me to distribute the appropriate tickets to everyone to include the VAMC patients/veterans. **Please make checks payable to: "Bryan Held" and in the subject/memo line of the check please write "DAV Day at the Ballpark".**

## ONE WW1 VETERAN LEFT

*Newsweek Tony Dokoupil article 9 Feb 08*

Of the 2 million American soldiers sent to the trenches during World War I, only Frank Woodruff Buckles is still alive. The retired Army corporal, who turned 107 this month, is all that



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prevents the First World War from slipping into the secondhand past. Harry Landis, the only other known WWI veteran, died at 108 last week in Tampa, Fla.

We're about to "lose a living touchstone of history," says Bob Patrick, director of the Library of Congress's

Britain plans to hold an elaborate ceremony at Westminster Abbey when the last of its three remaining WWI veterans die. Canada and France, which each have one remaining veteran, have also announced plans to hold a state funeral. In fact, America's plans are more akin to those of its wartime enemy, Germany, whose last veteran died last month at 107 without official fanfare. In America, the First World War remains a largely forgotten conflict. It has no national monument on the Washington Mall, no blockbuster film, no iconic image equivalent to soldiers' raising the flag on Iwo Jima. There wasn't even a reliable list of living veterans until a writer, researching a book about the war's place in the shadows, tallied one for himself in 2004. "Nobody - not the Department of Veterans Affairs, or the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion - knew how many there were," says Richard Rubin, author of the forthcoming book "The Last of the Doughboys." As far as he could tell, "that chapter of history was closed."

For now, the primarily privately funded World War One Museum in

Veterans History Project. Yet the United States has no firm or official plans to mark the passing of its last WWI veteran. "Frankly, we're trying to keep the focus on the living," says Phil Budahan, director of media relations for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Kansas City, Mo., is the only national institution with plans to commemorate the end of the Doughboy generation. "We just don't know what that means yet," says Denise Rendina, a spokeswoman for the museum.

The VA says that all plans must come from Congress, while the White House Commission on Remembrance, the agency officially tasked with honoring "America's fallen," says it will invite Buckles to join a national flag-raising tour that began in December. There's just one problem: the touring flag is from a World War II memorial.

### **FIVE YEARS OF VA HEALTH CARE FOR COMBAT VETERANS**

#### ***Peake: Honoring Commitment to Newest Combat Veterans***

WASHINGTON (February 26, 2008) -

Military veterans who served in combat since Nov. 11, 1998, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, are now eligible for five years of free medical care for most conditions from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This measure increases a two-year limit



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that has been in effect nearly a decade.

"By their service and their sacrifice, America's newest combat veterans have earned this special eligibility period for VA's world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

The five-year deadline has no effect upon veterans with medical conditions related to their military service. Veterans may apply at anytime after their discharge from the military -- even decades later -- for medical care for service-connected health problems.

The new provision, part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 signed by President Bush on Jan. 28, 2008, applies to care in a VA hospital, outpatient clinic or nursing home. It also extends VA dental benefits -- previously limited to 90 days after discharge for most veterans -- to 180 days.

Combat veterans who were discharged between Nov. 11, 1998 and Jan. 16, 2003, and who never took advantage of VA's health care system, have until Jan. 27, 2011 to qualify for free VA health care.

The five-year window is also open to activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, if they served in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998 and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Veterans who take advantage of this five-year window to receive VA health care can continue to receive care after five years, although they may have to pay copayments for medical problems unrelated to their military service. Copayments range from \$8 for a 30-day supply of prescription medicine to \$1,024 for the first 90 days of inpatient care each year.

### **VA HAS ADDED 20 NEW VET CENTERS**

#### ***Peake: Expansion Comes a Year Early to Help Combat Vets***

PHILADELPHIA (February 27, 2008) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake today said an expansion by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of its Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to returning combat veterans, is well ahead of schedule. In February 2007, VA announced it would open 23

new centers during the next two years. Fifteen of those centers are already operational, and five others are seeing patients in temporary facilities while finalizing their leases. The other three facilities will begin operations later this year.

"Building on our past successes, 2008 will see a permanent increase in the number of Vet Centers, as we bring the remaining facilities on line to reach a record 232 Vet Centers by the end of the year," Peake said. "To support this expansion and augment the



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staff at 61 existing Vet Centers, this year we are channeling a 44 percent increase in funding to the Readjustment Counseling Service, which operates the Vet Centers – nearly \$50 million more than last year's budget," he added. The community-based Vet Centers are a key component of VA's mental health program, providing veterans with mental health screening and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) counseling, along with help for family members dealing with bereavement and loved ones with PTSD. The 15 new Vet Centers that are open in permanent locations are in **Binghamton, N.Y.; Middletown, N.Y.; Watertown, N.Y.**; Hyannis, Conn.; DuBois, Pa.; Gainesville, Fla.; Melbourne, Fla.; Macon, Ga.; Manhattan, Kansas; Escanaba, Mich.; Saginaw, Mich.; Grand Junction, Colo.; Baton Rouge, La.; Killeen, Texas; and Las Cruces, N.M. Five additional Vet Centers are providing services in temporary space while they finalize their leases: They are in Toledo, Ohio; Ft. Myers, Fla.; Montgomery, Ala.; Everett, Wash.; and Modesto, Calif. The final three WASHINGTON (March 3, 2008) - Some members of the National Guard and the Reserves who serve on active duty will see a significant increase in their educational benefits, thanks to improvements announced today by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). "Reservists and National Guardsmen

locations where Vet Centers will open for clients later this year are in Berlin, N.H., **Nassau County, N.Y.**, and Fayetteville, Ark. Vet Centers provide counseling on employment, plus services on family issues, education and outreach, to combat veterans and their families. Vet Centers are staffed by small teams of professional counselors, outreach specialists and other specialists, many of whom are combat veterans themselves. VA's Vet Centers have hired 100 combat veterans back from Iraq and Afghanistan as outreach specialists, often placing them near military processing stations, to brief servicemen and women leaving the military about VA benefits. These outreach specialists meet with returning veterans, work through family assistance centers and visit military installations to carry the message that VA will be there for the troops and family members after discharge.

### **MORE EDUCATION BENEFITS COMING TO RESERVISTS, GUARDSMEN**

who serve multiple tours on active duty may get an increase in their educational benefits, in keeping with the value of their service to our nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. Under new provisions, members who accumulate three years on active duty, regardless of breaks in service, may be



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eligible for the maximum payment under the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP). Previously, reservists and guardsmen had to serve two continuous years on active duty to receive the highest payment. The new eligibility rules are retroactive to October, 1, 2007. The top payment under REAP is currently \$880.80 per month. The new law, part of the National Defense Authorization Act, also expands the period of eligibility for certain Guard and Reserve members who complete their service obligation before separation from the selected reserve. Members meeting these criteria may be eligible to use REAP benefits for a period of ten years following discharge. Benefits typically end upon separation for members who do not complete their full, obligated service. Additionally, some REAP-eligible National Guard and Reserve members may now make an extra contribution to the Department of Defense to increase their monthly benefit rates. Service members receive an additional \$5 per month for each \$20 contributed. With the maximum \$600 contribution, this option can add up to \$5,400 to a member's total 36-month education benefit package. Beginning on October 1, 2008, participants in REAP and the Montgomery GI Bill program for the Selected Reserve who pursue non-degree programs lasting less than

two years may also be eligible to receive accelerated payments. During FY 2007, more than 60,000 National Guardsmen and reservists were paid under REAP, more than 41,000 were paid under the Montgomery GI Bill program for the Selected Reserves, and approximately 344,000 participants were paid under the Montgomery GI Bill for active-duty members. For more information on changes to VA's GI Bill benefits, go to [www.GIBILL.va.gov](http://www.GIBILL.va.gov) or contact VA directly at 1-888-GIBILL1 (or 1-888-442-4551).

#### **SOME CAUTIOUS GOOD NEWS**

*NAUS: February 29, 2008*

This week NAUS learned that both the House and Senate Armed Forces Committee Chairmen and Ranking Members told their respective Budget Committee Chairmen that they would not support proposed increases in TRICARE fees and prescription co-pays.

House Armed Forces Committee Chairman Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO) and Ranking Member Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) told the House Budget Committee Chairman Rep. John Spratt (D-SC), "The Committee believes that these proposed fee increases would adversely affect many military families and will not support them."

Senate Armed Forces Committee Chairman Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) and Ranking Member Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) this week sent a letter to Senate Budget Committee Chairman Sen. Kent



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Conrad (D-ND) saying their committee rejects the idea of the increases.

Although no concrete proposals for increases has yet been made public knowledge, our old "friend" Dr. David Chu, the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness said in a hearing on Wednesday that Pentagon proposals would be based on the recommendations made late last year by the Task Force on Military Health Care.

A note of caution here: We need to closely watch the early stages of the budget process to ensure that the Budget Committees do not, repeat, not issue reconciliation instructions that might direct the Armed Services Committees to find "savings." Such an instruction might reopen the issue.

#### **SENATE VA COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Source: NAUS: February 29, 2008*

In a formal letter, Chairman Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and majority members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) informed the Senate Budget Committee that the Department of Veterans Affairs requires an increase of \$6.6 billion over Fiscal Year 2008 for all of VA's discretionary accounts. A major part of the request includes \$4.6 billion above current year spending to support VA's medical care operations. The SVAC request for medical services is \$2.6 billion above the administration's

As previously reported, the Task Force recommendations include increases in prescription copays for generic drugs to \$15 from \$3 and for brand-name to \$25 from \$9. Also, the Task Force proposed increases in TRICARE Prime that would nearly triple the costs for a family plan to \$1,750 from \$460 a year; establish a first-ever \$5 per month enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard and impose a first-time monthly \$10 enrollment fee for TRICARE for Life. request for medical care submitted earlier this year.

In addition, members of the SVAC rejected the administration's legislative proposals to levy enrollment fees and higher prescription copays for certain veterans access to VA care.

It is our understanding that the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, led by Chairman Bob Filner, has taken similar action to recommend increased VA funding and rejection of higher fees and copays. However, the official letter to the House Budget Committee was not available at the time of this update.

#### **VETERANS DISABILITY BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT BILLS**

On Thursday, Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC) and Rep. Steve Buyer (R-IN) held a joint press conference to announce the introduction of legislation aimed to simplify and modernize the DoD and VA veterans disability systems.



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On introducing **S. 2674**, the America's Wounded Warrior Act, Sen. Burr said, "Veterans deserve the best. They deserve a system that is modern, simple and available to older veterans and future veterans."

On introducing **H.R. 5509**, the Noble Warrior Act, Rep. Buyer said, "The military disability retirement system is too complex and cumbersome, and it is unfair to place wounded warriors into such a morass when all they should have to be concerned with is their families and rehabilitative therapy."

### LEGISLATIVE REPORT

*Bob Becker, Legislative Chairman*

The New York State Council of Veterans Organization 2008 Veterans Program State Legislative Goals:

#### **Mandated Dues to VA Health Law:**

Provide all honorably discharged veterans with access to full continuum of VA Health Care Services, all categories 1 through 8.

**Long Term Care:** VA is to provide the long term care needs of the veteran population including nursing home care, care for chronic mental injuries (PTSD, TBI), Home Care and Support Services.

**Concurrent Receipt of Retirement and Disability:** We urge Congress to

**Veterans Tax Credit:** For all veterans who served in the armed forces, active and reserve.

**County Service Agencies:** Amend the New York State Executive Law 359 Article 17 (formula change) amount using Year 2007 Cola, for full funding for the county service agencies.

**Property Tax:** (Alternative) increase real property tax exemption to one hundred percent 100% of assessed taxable value of property.

**States Veterans Cemetery:** We urge that the State of New York to access the Federal Law that fully funds the establishment of State Veterans Cemeteries.

eliminate the current disability placed on twenty year term military service members by enacting legislation consistent with that provided to all federal retirees.

**Independent Budget:** DAV together with its budget partners, AMVETS, PVT, and VFW have issued the 2009 Independent Budget report, \$3 billion difference between what the President has recommended for VA and what is actually needed. There is not enough



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money for veterans health care, which would result in fewer services to deal with TBI, PTSD, visual and hearing impairments, and spinal cord injury. The DAV will be working with Congress to correct funding shortfalls.

#### **Legislation that needs our support:**

**HR-2514:** Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care

**HR-3819:** Veterans Emergency Care Fairness Act

**HR-4107:** Women Veterans Health Care Empowerment Act

#### **TAPS**

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

**James A. Beaumont**, Chapter #8, 2/20/08

**George R. Gallien, Sr.**, Chapter #20, 2/15/08

**James A. Ainsworth**, Chapter #153, 2/27/08

#### **Rehab Cruise XVII**

July 8, 2008

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**

##### **State Executive Committee and Seminars**

March 28, 2008 to March 30, 2008  
Hudson Valley Resort  
Kerhonkson, New York

##### **Department of New York's 87th Anniversary Celebration**

Sunday May 18, 2008  
El Caribe Country Club  
Brooklyn, New York

##### **Department of New York Convention**

June 22, 2008 to June 25, 2008  
Hudson Valley Resort  
Kerhonkson, New York  
Nautical Empress  
Freeport, NY



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**2008 National DAV Convention**

August 9, 2008 to August 12, 2008

Bally's Hotel Las Vegas

South Las Vegas, NV