

National Headquarters
3725 Alexandria Pike
Cold Spring, KY 41076
Phone: 859-441-7300
Fax: 859-441-1416
Toll Free: 877-426-2838
dav.org

National Service & Legislative
Headquarters
807 Maine Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20024-2410
Phone: 202-554-3501
Fax: 202-554-3581

TO: National Executive Committee
Past National Commanders
All Employees
Department Commanders and Adjutants
Commanders and Adjutants Association
DAV Auxiliary National Adjutant

FROM: J. Marc Burgess, National Adjutant

SUBJECT: COVID-19 and the State of DAV

DATE: March 16, 2020

As measures unfold across the country to help prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus, I want to take a moment to address the state of DAV and discuss the virus' impact on our mission and the heroes we serve.

National Commander Whitehead and I have faith that the veteran community is able to face this pandemic with sensibility and composure. It's not in our nature to overreact, and we know how vital our mission is to the heroes we serve and their families.

At the same time, due to their service-connected injuries and illnesses, disabled veterans may be more vulnerable to this virus than our civilian counterparts. As leaders, we must thoughtfully balance the needs of those we assist with the safety of our staff and volunteers, as well as all others living in our communities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization continue to recommend social distancing as one of the most effective means of prevention. Based upon this guidance, DAV will continue operations with most of our employees at both national headquarters working from home while maintaining minimal essential employees onsite. In the field, we plan to keep our service offices open for business, however closed to foot traffic.

This may change. However, for the time being we hope veterans will call or email our offices through our website benefitsquestions.org. We will continue to take appropriate measures to safeguard our team members. Although we cannot be certain, we would expect this to continue for at least two weeks, if not longer. Our commitment remains not only our employees but also the men and women who served.

Just as COVID-19 has had an unprecedented global impact that has affected nearly all of our daily lives, it has already harmed our charity's operations and, thus, the veterans we help.

The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic was canceled this year for the first time in its 30-plus-year history. Additionally, important DAV entrepreneurship and employment events have been postponed, canceled or rescheduled as virtual events. DAV Night Out, the Friday dinners DAV hosts for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center patients and their families, has been postponed indefinitely. With heavy hearts, we have also made the decision to cancel all of our upcoming information seminars, which are designed to educate veterans about their benefits and connect them with our free advocacy services.

For as long as it's safe to do so, we will continue providing disaster relief to those impacted by storms and other catastrophic events. As stated before, our national service officers remain available to serve veterans with their claims for VA benefits, though all of those interactions must now be handled over the phone or electronically. We anticipate that our volunteer and state-level benefits advocates may be adjusting operations based on where they are located and the virus' impact in their communities.

We have shared guidance with our hospital service coordinators from the Department of Veterans Affairs. In at least a few cases, in-hospital volunteerism has been curtailed or stopped. In other locations, the DAV Transportation Network has been suspended. We're deeply concerned about the impact this could have on veterans who rely upon us for life-saving care. We are applying very strict protocols for volunteers to protect and enable this lifeline to continue. We are doing everything we can to keep that program in operation and appreciate the patience and understanding of volunteers and veterans as we cope with this unprecedented situation.

We cannot know how long this will persist, but we can't forget how important our mission is. Wherever possible, we're going to look to leverage technology to help us continue to serve and advocate. We're heeding recommendations from the CDC. Most DAV staff members are now working remotely and travel has been extremely limited. We encourage all of you to educate yourselves on the coronavirus and incorporate preventive measures into your daily routines.

We're doing everything we can to continue our advocacy with Congress and the VA. Although many congressional hearings are being canceled and access to Capitol Hill and VA is being restricted, we're still in direct contact with key VA leaders and congressional staff. Some meetings won't be possible but others will be conducted by phone or over the internet. We're actively working to remain fully engaged as decision affecting veterans and their families are made. We'll continue to keep you informed and encourage you to remain engaged in our fight through DAV CAN online as well.

Looking ahead, we don't plan on canceling events that could advance our mission to help veterans and their families until we're certain those decisions are necessary. At this time, we plan to hold DAV's national convention in Dallas in August and centennial events as scheduled.

We're proceeding with our partners at the VA to host the National Disabled Veterans TEE Tournament in September.

We'll be asking our state-level leaders to carefully evaluate upcoming gatherings like department conventions and even chapter meetings. Guidance on hosting mass gatherings or large community events has been issued for activities that covers the next eight weeks. We encourage our leaders to monitor guidance from state and local authorities as well as the CDC to make appropriate and informed decisions on how to conduct business in light of current events. The affairs of DAV at the state and local level can wait if it puts our members or communities at risk.

It is impossible to forecast every conceivable consequence of this global pandemic. It is constantly evolving. Please stay tuned to dav.org/covid/ and our social networks for more information about our charity's reaction as it becomes available. You can also refer veterans to benefitsquestions.org to digitally reach out to our benefits advocates. We're updating davjobfairs.org to accommodate our new virtual career fair schedule.

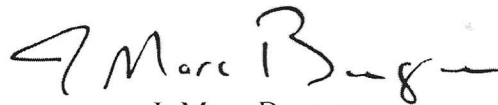
Our prayers go out to all of you who have been or will be impacted by this disease. We know this will create hardships for many. As it has already devastated our economy, that fallout will undoubtedly impact DAV's ability to carry out our mission and provide hope to our nation's deserving heroes and their families.

We will be asking, in the coming months, for your assistance to limit the impact this will have on our ability to serve.

For now, know that you are foremost in our thoughts, hearts and prayers. Please continue to monitor the situation and look out for our nation's veterans who may be disproportionately at risk of infection.

May God bless and keep you. Please share our video message on this subject through your social networks and stay tuned to our communications channels for additional information as it becomes available.

With sincere appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Marc Burgess". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

J. Marc Burgess
National Adjutant