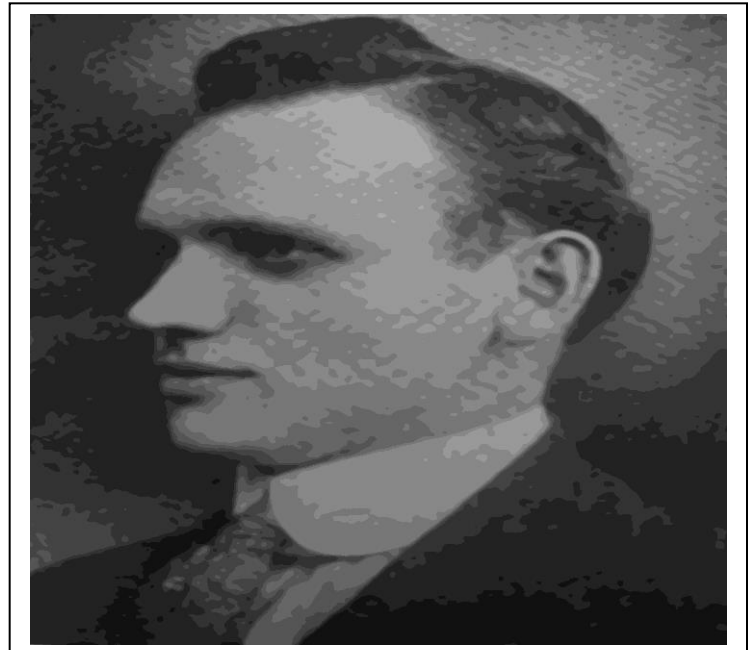
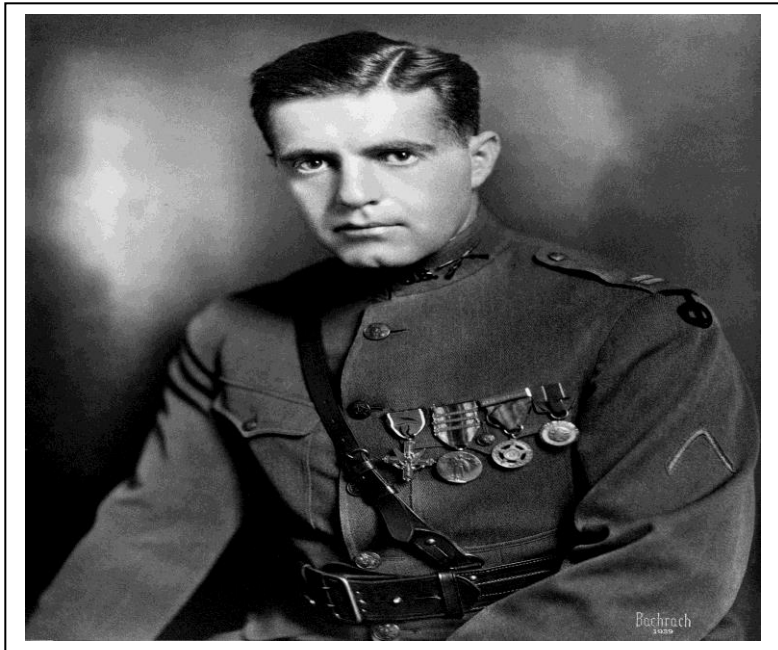




## Department of Florida April 2020 Newsletter



Top Left Judge Robert Marx, DAV founder and 1<sup>st</sup> National Commander  
Top right DAV 1<sup>st</sup> National Adjutant Raymond Lasance  
Bottom Left DAV Centennial Emblem  
Bottom Right DAV current National Adjutant J. Marc Burgess

## Department Commander Thomas Ayala



This was a very slow month. I visited South Palm Beach County Chapter 152. Due to the COVID – 19 virus pandemic, most Chapters decided to follow the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Florida State Emergency by canceling their monthly meetings.

DAV Department of Florida is responding to the recent CDC and the Florida State of Emergency regarding COVID – 19 Pandemic. With the recommendation from the Finance Committee, beginning Monday March 16, ALL DAV DSO Offices will be closed and will reopen April 6. Department Headquarters will be open but will not conduct interviews.

As most of you have seen the recent news on COVID 19 Virus Pandemic, Department Officers and I want you all to be safe. Do not take unnecessary risks. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Adults 60 and older and those with underlying medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease are more likely to develop serious illness. This age group is all our brothers and sisters from WWII to Vietnam War Era. The COVID-19 Call Center is available 24/7 at 1 (866) 779-6121 or email at [COVID-19@flhealth.gov](mailto:COVID-19@flhealth.gov).

On Thursday, March 12, I visited South Palm Beach County Chapter 152. Commander Michael Kennedy and his Chapter members are doing an excellent job in their community. They have only one Service Officer and are seeing 30-40 veterans a month.

Commander Kennedy is currently looking for more Service Officers to assist in their area. During the meeting, Commander Kennedy made a recommendation to cancel all fundraising activities from this month since all chapter members fell within the age group affected by COVID-19. Chapter members agreed. Commander Kennedy also challenged the Chapter members by asking them to bring one potential member to their next meeting.

Several reminders I would like to put out: (1) If you haven't signed up for the Commander's Action Network (CAN), please do so. DAV has Legislative News every week.

(2) DAV has a new volunteer website, which can be counted on your LVAP. [Volunteerforveterans.org](http://Volunteerforveterans.org) is a great way to help local veterans in need from shopping, yard work or to just have some company. Unfortunately, not many of our veterans are using the website to request a volunteer to help with their needs. If you know a chapter member who is in need of the services listed above, please encourage them to register online. Click on the website above and register.

(3) Please visit DAV.org, under the Membership Tab – go to Member Advantages. We have several new partners who offer DAV members discounts. I have personally used four of our partners discounts. Most recent one was 1-800-FLOWERS. Ordered flower for a funeral.

This time of year, Chapters will have elections of Officers. If you would like one of the Department Line Officers or I to install your new Chapter Officers, please contact our Department Adjutant Andy Marshall and he will confirm which Line Officer will be there. He can be reach at Department Headquarters (352) 331-0945 or via email [andy@davfla.com](mailto:andy@davfla.com).





## Department Senior Vice Commander Duane Godfrey

This month I haven't had time to visit any chapters, after having the cough from the flu and now the corona virus pandemic everything I had planned was cancelled.

I hope everyone of our veterans and their families are doing what you have to do to stay safe and healthy thru these times of uncertainty. We have been staying close to home and doing some gardening and other neglected chores.

We are looking forward to our Department of Florida Convention coming up in June 18 - 20 at Lake Mary Florida Marriott, there are a few rooms still available so if you haven't made your reservations to attend do so now before they are gone.

With nominations and elections coming up in most Chapters in the coming months if you need one of the line officers to install your new officers in now is the time to call in and request them at 352 331 0945 or email them to [andy@davfla.com](mailto:andy@davfla.com) .

If you go on the DAV web page and go to Veterans scroll down to events you can see the upcoming events so you can make you plans to attend, I Hope to see you there.

With this covidvirus going around the best thing you can do is to stay home and stay safe. We at the Department of Florida DAV wish everyone good health and know that we care.

The Testimonial Dinner for Auxiliary National Commander and Florida Adjutant Diane Franz has been rescheduled for July 11, 2020 at the same location, Florida Hotel in Orlando. Come out and honor our Auxiliary National Commander and DAVA Department Adjutant Diane Franz.

Packets for registration for the Department Convention have been mailed. Room rates are \$91.00 single or double plus tax unless you pay by chapter check then no tax added. Be sure to complete the registration forms included and return to Department Headquarters. Thus far the Department Convention has not been cancelled. Please ensure you complete the registration form legibly. The preregistration form is the only form to be returned to headquarters. **Each delegate must bring the Chapter delegate Registration Form signed by both the Chapter Commander and Adjutant.**

The cutoff date for hotel reservations is May 26.

As required by Department Policy, the Department must publish a Convention Journal. If you wish to place an ad in the Convention Journal, please have the ad camera ready. Cost of ads are Full page \$165.00; Half Page ad \$100.00; One quarter page ad \$60.00 and Business Card size ad is \$30.00. **Deadline for Convention Journal Ads are due NLT May 15.**

Stay safe and pay attention to guidelines issued by government agencies.







## Department Junior Vice Commander John Raber

Congratulations to the following chapter's for meeting their 2019-2020 membership goal:

- Manatee Chapter 18 with 102.78 % of goal with 55 members over their goal.
- Tamarac Chapter 73 with 100.25% of their goal with 1 member over goal.
- Venice Gulf Chapter 101 with 100% of their goal.
- Space Coast Chapter 123 with 102.00% of their goal with 15 members over goal
- Miami Doral Chapter 159 with 110% of their goal with 7 members over their goal.

Gerald A Shonk Chapter 70 needs 2 members to reach their goal. Suwanee Memorial Chapter 126 needs 1 member to reach their goal. Orange Blossom Gardens Chapter 150 needs 2 members to reach their goal.

As of March 26, membership report, the Department of Florida needs 2, 030 members to reach our goal. We have 929 Trial Members; 3, 866 Part Life Members and 58, 377 Full Life Members for a total of 63, 172 members.

The Department Top 5 Membership Recruiters are as follows:

- NSO Dana Beck 53 members recruited
- NSO Naomi Mathis 44 members recruited
- National Executive Committeeman Jack Johnson 23 members recruited
- NSO Darren Roche 21 members recruited
- NSO Liza Perez with 19 members recruited

Thanks for your recruitment efforts.

I was fortunate to visit one Chapter this moth and that was Chapter 4 in Tampa. Always working to fulfill the mission. As a lot of Chapters are at a standstill, it's a good time to clean and paint your chapter home. Our members have been working hard at our Chapter and for that I thank them.

This is a time were all of us need to follow the guidelines of the CDC and our State Commander as we have now surpassed all of the other countries infected with the Corona Virus.

This is the time of year we start Nominations for Officers please seek the advice of the Adjutant on how to pursue this. The DAV is running at minimal staff and will be available by E-mail and by calling the National number. VA is not allowing volunteers at this time in the Hospitals or Outpatient Clinics please check first if your unit or Chapter Volunteers with Bingo or other activities. We will return to business soon and remember let's stick together in these troubling times.

As I stated, now that chapters are not meeting and if you have your own building you can do some improvements on your chapter home. Get a few volunteers together and spruce up the place. Perform some landscaping to the outside of the chapter home. Paint the inside of your building, change the air filters for the air conditioning system, cleaning and sanitizing the bar for those few chapters that operate bars.

Have been informed that Department Headquarters is taking time to spruce up Headquarters. Commander Ayala and Adjutant Marshall have been trimming a tree and other hedges, etc., and next week will clean the back-room storage area.

As we continue to battle the COVID-19 virus, I would like to encourage you, as the newsletter suggests to do a "Buddy Check" for your Chapter members and other veterans you know.





## Department Chaplain Chip Hanson

Now is the time for us individually and as an organization to show our unity through restraint, courage, strength and loyalty. During these times of fear and confusion we must openly practice these traits. Some of us may be suffering either physically or emotionally and as former President Regan stated, "Stay the Course". It was Charles Dickens who wrote, "Suffering has been stronger than all other teachings, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape."

I have no idea how long this pandemic will last or how many will be infected, Jim Rohn once wrote: "You cannot change your destination overnight. You can change your direction. Mr. Rohn is an entrepreneur, author & speaker.

Whatever you believe in now is the time to believe. I am a Christian and I live by my faith in Jesus Christ. However, whatever you believe in grab and hold onto it.

Kar Cammellai Moyo once wrote: "Nothing but this moment is guaranteed, and I pray that this is a lesson that each person can learn before it has to be discovered."

Laurie Formby once wrote: "When we volunteer to help those in need, we are building rewards in heaven that will last for eternity."

Chaplain Chip Hanson once wrote: "Fear can destroy, courage and loyalty will bring growth with strength."

A DAV chaplain's responsibility is to help the DAV family continue to grow and be strong. If you are a DAV chaplain, you are part of a nonsectarian organization that accepts all faiths. You do not just represent your faith at the department or chapter levels. You represent all faiths as the organization's spiritual leader. It is important that you respect other's' beliefs as you would have them respect yours.

It is not necessary to know all the different religious entities within the organization. What is important is knowing whom to contact in the event veterans or their families reach out to you for direction or guidance.

Faith of all varieties has an important role in shaping the way we live and the choices we make.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. *1 Peter 4:10.*





## **John Markiewicz Department Judge Advocate**

As we all now are aware the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic has severely impacted the operation of our Chapters and Service Offices as well as society in general. Just about all events have been cancelled or postponed, meetings and gatherings of more than 10 people have been discouraged, and in some cases prohibited, parks and beaches have been closed and we have all been advised to avoid travel that is not absolutely essential.

So, what are we going to do to help our members, their families, friends and our veterans who are housebound or otherwise unable to fend for themselves? What can our Chapters do in this age of COVID-19?

A term that I am hearing a lot lately is "Buddy Check", does your Chapter have a phone tree? Are your Officers calling the membership to check on how they are holding up and if they need any assistance or if they know of family, friends or other veterans that need assistance? Sending out emails and posting on your websites is fine for getting the word out on who to contact and where/how to get assistance, however, the personal call or "Buddy Check" is a very important tool to reach out to those who may not know what to do or how to get help. Remember many of our older veterans may not use email or the internet and are not getting all of the information being put out and they are often the ones that need our help the most.

Service Officers, what about your clients? The Department Service Offices have been closed at the VA Clinics and Hospitals, the Transportation Network has been shut down and most of our Chapter Service Offices are probably no longer seeing clients at this time. Many of these clients are in need of help or at least a friendly phone call to see if they are doing OK. It would not hurt to contact them to let them know we are still there for them and have not forgotten them in this crisis.

Many of our members, their families, friends and other veterans need help in getting to the stores or getting food and medicines delivered to them, many of them have no way to get to the Doctor or other appointments.

In short, volunteer opportunities are available and very much needed. Our Chapter members do not have to sit around home with nothing to do while everything is shut down. Our members need to be reaching out, as much as they are able, and offering our help in any way that they can. Our Chapters and members should be doing this sort of thing all the time, it is what we are all about, but especially now when so many are in crisis and the normal avenues for assistance may not be available.

As a reminder, I announced my candidacy to seek re-election as Department Judge Advocate. I look forward to hopefully see you at our Department Convention provided we are able to hold it. It is an important event as we elect new officers and pass a proposed budget for the department.

Keep safe and ensure you follow guidelines set forth by government agencies. The most recent for Florida is that persons over age 65 remain in home as much as possible and only go out for fresh air, medical needs and food shopping.

Please ensure you share the newsletter with your Chapter Service Officers and remind them that VA Regional Office is closed until further notice and that all DSO offices are closed until further notice. Chapter Service Offices should also be closed to avoid personal contact and keep themselves safe.



## Andy Marshall Department Adjutant

### Legislative Report

#### Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act

November 22, 2019

A new Bill introduced to the Senate would establish that some veterans who were exposed to airborne hazards or toxins from burn pits during their military service would have new pathways to care and compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Unfortunately for veterans, the new Bill would not grant benefits or health care to veterans who served near burn pits or create a new category for presumptive disabilities. The new Bill, however, may allow for new pathways for VA benefits and "remove red tape" for veterans' disability claims, according to Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Deputy National Director for Benefits Shane Liermann.

According to DAV officials, if a veteran submits a claim for disability because of exposure in one of the listed areas and times pertaining to the first Gulf War and those who have served since 9/11, the VA may provide them a medical exam to further determine if their illness or disability is the result of burn pit exposure.

Locations and times include:

- Iraq from August 2, 1990 - February 28, 1991;
- Iraq from March 19, 2003 - present;
- The Southwest Asia Theater of operations other than Iraq including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates beginning August 2, 1990 - present;
- Afghanistan from September 11, 2001 - present;
- Djibouti from September 11, 2001 - present;
- Other locations and times established under the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry or by the VA in collaboration with the Department of Defense (DoD).

#### The Deborah Sampson Act

November 23, 2019

A Bill that Congressman Anthony Brindisi introduced recently unanimously passed the House of Representatives.

Brindisi's H.R. 2972 passed the House of Representatives as part of the landmark U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reform package called The Deborah Sampson Act.

Brindisi's Bill statutorily requires VA's Women Veterans Call Center to be accessible via text and creates an online platform, one-stop-shop for women veterans' benefits and information specific to women veterans. The Bill is just one part of a modernization effort to improve accessibility and efficiency at the VA for women veterans, according to a news release.

The Deborah Sampson Act will require the Women Veterans Call Center to be available via text messaging. Also, the legislation requires the VA to create a centralized information page in which women veterans can access gender-specific data, pages, and resources throughout the VA system. This page will include locations of VA medical centers, CBOC's, Vet Centers, Regional Offices and contact information for women's health coordinators. According to VA officials, the webpage will be updated at least every 90 -110 business days.

In addition to Brindisi's provisions, the Deborah Sampson Act will:

- Empower women veterans by expanding group counseling for veterans and their family members and call centers for women Veterans.
- Improve the quality of care for infant children of women veterans by increasing the number of days of maternity care VA facilities can provide.
- Eliminate barriers to care by increasing the number of gender-specific providers in VA facilities, training clinicians, and retrofitting VA facilities to enhance privacy and improve the environment of care for women veterans.
- Authorize additional grants for organizations supporting low-income women veterans and increases resources for homeless women and their families.
- Improve the collection and analysis of data regarding women veterans and require the VA to report on the availability of prosthetics made for women veterans.



## Adjutant's Column Continued

Department Commander Ayala and I are both very aware that many of you have questions and concerns regarding our upcoming department convention and/or chapter meetings and elections. As is the case in any event or activity, should there ever be a question concerning the safety of our members, we will always support the decision of a local entity to cancel or postpone DAV events to include conventions and meetings of any sort.

As it relates to department conventions or other meetings, the Department Executive Committees (DEC) should make the final decision as to whether our convention or other meeting is canceled or postponed. Of course, several factors should be evaluated by the DEC prior to voting to take such action. Only local leaders of departments truly understand the local situation and demographics of their membership. Our Department facing large cancellation penalties might wish to consult a lawyer experienced in the local courts. This is because there are many factors that may reduce or even eliminate those penalties. Those factors include: (1) the specific terms of the agreement; (2) the actions of local government in the area of the venue; and (3) state law regarding the effect of "impossibility" or "impracticability" of performance.

In the event that our department convention is canceled or postponed, barring any specific language in our bylaws that addresses cancellation or postponement of the department convention, the current elected and appointed leaders of the department should remain intact until the next convention occurs – whether it is postponed until later this summer or canceled completely at which point it would occur next year. Should any elected or appointed officer not wish to fulfill another term, they may resign their position and the department should fill such vacancy as specifically provided in our department bylaws. **Currently, our Bylaws state a commander cannot serve more than one year.**

Robert Rules of Order (RRO) and past precedence of DAV actions would support leaving the current line in place in the event that a convention is cancelled. The National Bylaws read the same way in terms of the Commander not being able to serve more than one year. However, when our convention was cancelled in 1942 due to WWII, DAV left officers in place for the next year (as per RRO). PNC Laurence Milton served two terms as National Commander from August 16, 1941 through August 15, 1943.

For chapters that wish to cancel monthly meetings, that decision should be made by the leaders of the chapter and attempts should be made to notify members of such cancellation using social media and other local resources. As many chapters are scheduled to elect and appoint officers during the next few months, any chapter which does not meet during the specific month noted for nominations and election of chapter officers, should send notice to all of its members announcing the date, time and location of a special election of officers for the coming year, once normal operations resume.

We realize that chapters have had to cancel or reschedule many fund-raising events, i.e., Bingo, Bar Operations, Forget-Me-Not Drives, Golf Tournaments, etc., and will have a definite impact on their fund-raising operations. Chapters will have less funds in their treasury to fund their programs which provide assistance to local veterans.

Thanks to all who participated in DAV's Vehicle Donation Program. The Department received \$23, 379.88 as a result of the sale and salvaging of donated vehicles in Florida. Please refer to last month's newsletter for information on this program. This amount almost allows the department to pay our department employees the two weeks we are closed due to the Coronavirus.



Visit the DAV Vehicle Donation Toolkit on the membership portal ([www.dav.org/membership/members](http://www.dav.org/membership/members))

**Chapters visited by Department Line Officers & Adjutant Since Department Convention**  
1, 4, 6, 12, 13 (2x), 16, 18, 22, 23, 38, 49, 67, 70, 78, 84, 86, 87, 97, 101, 109, 112, 113, 129, 152, 155, 158



## Calendar of Events

April 1 April Fools' Day



April 5 Palm Sunday



April 8 Passover Begins



April 10 Good Friday



April 12 Easter



April 13 Thomas Jefferson's Birthday



[Adjutant's Column Continued](#)

### H.R.886 — 116th Congress (2019-2020)

This bill directs the Department of Justice to establish a Veterans Treatment Court Program to provide grants and technical assistance for state, local, and tribal governments to develop and maintain veteran's treatment courts.

Passed Senate on January 16, 2020.

A bill working its way through Congress is packed with provisions for veterans, active-duty members and military dependents.

Among those is a measure that would block schools from [penalizing student veterans for Department of Veteran Affairs delays](#). Other items include burial and memorial benefits, expansions of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and changes to VA's debt collection practices.

#### Education Benefits

After the public relations fiasco caused by VA's [late GI Bill payments](#) this fall, Congress set out to ensure that it protects veterans from repercussions against them due to VA's negligence. The new legislation would:

- Make schools ineligible for GI Bill tuition payments if they placed penalties or burdens on students as a result of the VA failing to pay GI Bill payments on time.
- Block schools from kicking veterans out of classes if their GI Bill payments are late.
- Require the VA to tell veterans exactly how much their monthly housing allowance rather than require more guessing.

#### Burial and Memorial Benefits

Under the legislation:

- Spouses and children would be eligible for government provided headstones if they are buried in a VA cemetery.
- Spouses and children of veterans buried in tribal cemeteries would get all the same benefits as the veteran.

#### Expansion of VA Dental Program

The bill also would give VA one year to report to Congress on the costs, enrollment estimates and feasibility of expanding the dental program.

Vietnam-era and other pre-9/11 veterans are one step closer to accessing a program designed to pay their spouses or other family support for in-home care even as rules tighten for who can enroll, as part of a highly anticipated proposed rule release from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Among the changes laid out in the 231-page proposal is a shift in the level of care veterans must require to qualify; a change to monthly payment amounts and how they are calculated; a downsizing of benefits tiers; and a benefits grace period for caregivers who leave the program due to domestic or intimate partner violence.

No start date was given for the proposed changes. Their rollout, however, is tied to an already delayed IT upgrade needed to handle the anticipated influx of applicants. That update is expected by late fall, VA officials said in a release. From there two years must pass before the benefit is expanded to veterans who did not serve after 9/11. The program also serves those provided care for a service-connected disabled veteran—not a veteran providing care for someone else.

The VA's caregiver stipend program has long been available only to caregivers of post 9/11 veterans. The program currently pays stipends to about 18,000 caregivers, with dollar amounts based on a three-tiered system tied to the Bureau of Labor Statistics rates for in-home health aids.

According to the internet I found that the rates for in-home health aids are as follows:

The median annual wage for home health aides was \$24,200 in May 2018.

The median annual wage for personal care aides was \$24,020 in May 2018.

#### [COVID-19 Project Vet Relief News Release](#)

The Florida Veterans Foundation has teamed up with the American Legion of Florida to create the COVID-19 Project Vet Relief Fund. This will help with emergency assistance for those veterans who are affected by this pandemic around the state of Florida.

Veterans in need of assistance will find the application form, requirements and guidelines listed on the website at [www.HelpFLVets.org](http://www.HelpFLVets.org). Due to limited personnel access, they are not taking phone calls and will accept online/email applications only.

## NSO Supervisor's Column Michael Michelotti

Please be advised the Bay Pines VA Regional Office and our co-located National Service Office has been closed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Your National Service Officers remain working remotely from home on your behalf due to the call by the CDC and the World Health Organization for social distancing. During this difficult time, your National Service Officer can still be reached online by visiting [benefitsquestions.org](https://benefitsquestions.org) or by sending your inquiry via email to [DAV.VBASPT@va.gov](mailto:DAV.VBASPT@va.gov). We appreciate your patience and understanding as we do our best to fulfill the promise made to our nation's heroes and their families. Thank you.

The Federal Government has taken action to stimulate the economy by authorizing a \$1,200 (or \$2,400 for joint tax filers) payment from the Internal Revenue Service to adults with incomes up to \$75,000, plus another \$500 per child, based on either your 2018 or 2019 tax return. Individuals on Social Security are eligible to receive this relief payment as long as their total income does not exceed the limit, and the benefit does not impact your eligibility for low-income programs like SSI or Medicaid.

Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del) led a bipartisan group of over 50 Members of Congress urging President Trump to utilize key military assets and organization to help resolve severe medical supply shortages and assist impacted communities with testing and other medical services.

"We believe that the United States Armed Forces can provide some of the resources, expertise, and organization-at-scale needed to provide the requested relief to states and municipalities across the country," **wrote the Members**. "We applaud your Administration's efforts to coordinate national efforts to combat the crisis, but we need the United States federal government to do more than advise from the background; we need the United States federal government to be the tip of the spear in the fight against COVID-19."

The letter calls on the President to take three actions in response to the global pandemic and national public health emergency:

- Conduct a Coronavirus Airlift with U.S. military airlift capabilities leading to help resolve supply chain shortfalls.
- Deploy the Defense Logistics Agency to coordinate supply distribution here in the U.S. and across the globe.
- Mobilize military health care personnel to fill personnel gaps, especially for urgent services like testing.

"The U.S. military is renowned for its unparalleled global war-fighting and humanitarian capability," **the Members continued**. "But such a capacity is impossible without an incredible and sophisticated logistical organization that can transport and coordinate on a global scale and across private and public organizations. I urge you to exercise your authority as commander-in-chief to leverage the military's unique capabilities to help our communities here at home."

Department Headquarters will be closed until further notice. Although the adjutant is in the office Wednesdays and Thursdays, clients are not being seen. Our DSO and HSC offices have been closed for the past two weeks and the rest of this week. Inasmuch as social distancing remains in force, we will continue to protect our employees and volunteers by office closures.

Also, inasmuch as the Government Mandate remains that you cannot have more than ten persons together at any one time, this clearly precludes chapters from meeting in April.

While DAV has shared guidance from the CDC on the DAV website, things are changing daily. In at least a few cases, individual states have suspended LVAP activities completely. While we are concerned about the impact this could have on veterans who rely upon this assistance, our first priority is the health and safety of our dedicated volunteers and those we serve.

It is incredibly difficult to forecast every consequence of this global pandemic. It is constantly evolving. Please stay tuned to [davi.org/covid](https://davi.org/covid) and DAV's social networks for more information about DAV's reaction as it becomes available.

