



# DAV Reaches Major Milestone in 2015

## *Represents Over 1 Million Veterans for Claims before VA*

In January 2015, DAV became the first and only organization authorized by 1 million veterans as their accredited representative for claims before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

DAV has delivered by providing free assistance that has ensured billions of dollars in earned benefits have been granted to America's veterans.

The VA issues a report every other month on how many veterans each organization represents. The final 2014 report had DAV in the mid-900,000s, but the first and most recent report of 2015 showed DAV having 1,001,739 powers of attorney on behalf of veterans.

While not everyone who holds a power of attorney with DAV has an active claim or appeal with the organization, DAV has assisted each with at least one claim for benefits. Though it's impossible to determine who the 1 millionth individual was, DAV leaders believe the landmark figure speaks volumes about the organization's credibility and commitment to the needs of veterans.

"It is humbling to think so many veterans have placed their faith in DAV," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "Every Service Officer in DAV takes that honor seriously, and we're all working hard to provide the best representation possible."

Data on how much in compensation has been secured for all 1 million veterans isn't available, but \$3.7 billion in new and retroactive benefits was awarded to DAV's clients just in 2014.

Service to fellow disabled veterans has always been DAV's main mission and backbone ever since the organization was chartered by Congress in 1932. An astounding 10,714,830 claims have been filed since 1932. More than \$87.4 billion has been secured in retroactive and annual disability compensation for veterans, their families and survivors within that timeframe.

"Veterans earn benefits and compensation for the sacrifices they and their families endure while serving in the military and often long after he or she has hung up the uniform. But too often the veteran does not know what is available, what has been

earned or how to go about obtaining it, said National Service and Legislative Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. "That's why DAV puts so many resources into providing the best representation anywhere."

DAV trains, equips and directly supports National Service Officers (NSOs), Transition Service Officers (TSOs), Department Service Officers, Chapter Service Officers and County Veteran Service Officers accredited by DAV in every corner of the United States.

"Providing top-notch, free assistance to veterans has always been DAV's top priority," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "That's why we have so many offices around the country, but we also keep in mind those who cannot make it into the more populated areas where our offices are located."

DAV's fleet of specially equipped Mobile Service Offices has been traveling the country, bringing expert claims representation directly to veterans and their families. DAV traveled to more than 900 different locations in 2014, mostly in rural areas and at many colleges and university campuses.

"We are proud to get our Mobile Service Office deployed to serve more veterans than ever before," said Marszalek. "Every veteran should be able to get the help they need, regardless of where they live."

DAV's TSOs provide informational presentations, service medical record reviews and initiate claims.

They assist veterans at nearly 100 military installations within the continental United States. In 2014, TSOs filed 17,126 claims.

Always working to improve, DAV filed 12,557 claims in the past year electronically, by far the most of any organization.

While a large swath of DAV's services are provided directly by full-time, professional NSOs, a large number of volunteers at the Chapter and Department levels are trained to assist and provide immediate answers in starting claims and obtaining benefits.

"These volunteers in the Department and Chapter service programs are vitally important to the fulfillment of DAV's overall mission of service to veterans," Marszalek said. "They all go through in-depth initial training and follow-up training to have their certification renewed annually."

DAV's Service Program is there for veterans throughout the process. If a claim is initially denied, DAV provides free representation before the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

Veterans and family members can receive free professional assistance with claims for compensation or pensions at any DAV National Service Office location.