



NEWS RELEASE

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DAV Appreciates Joint Chiefs Chairman's Response

WASHINGTON—The Disabled American Veterans is expressing appreciation to Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen's thoughtful response supporting the federal government's responsibility to care for veterans suffering from service-connected disabilities, but cautioned that relying on charitable organizations cannot meet the needs of veterans.

Adm. Mullen has explained his comments were "a poor choice of words about the best ways to meet the needs of our returning veterans." In an April 26 address to The Council on Foundations, Adm. Mullen said veterans returning home need help with education, training, medical care, substance abuse and mental health, suggesting community non-profit groups are the answer to meeting veterans needs. "I am not arguing in any way, shape or form that this should be the purview of our government because what I would like to see happen is community outreach to [servicemembers] and the government just be out of it," Mullen said.

In his response to the DAV, Adm. Mullen agreed that "the Defense and Veterans Affairs Departments have immense responsibilities in this regard -- responsibilities that all of us in leadership positions take very seriously."

Washington Headquarters Executive Director David W. Gorman said in a letter to Adm. Mullen that the DAV recognized his desire that veterans be served. "But we caution that the responsibly for their care resides with our federal government," he said. "Too often in the past when the guns have fallen silent, our federal programs for veterans have waned. Shifting more responsibility to charitable organizations would leave veterans awash in a sea of despair."

"Private charitable organizations have their place, but never must our government rely on them to care for our veterans," Gorman said. "The young men and women who serve under you will need the VA, DoD and other agencies for the next 50 to 60 years."

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation's disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation's disabled veterans and their families. For more information, visit the organization's Web site www.dav.org.

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