



COMMANDER'S LETTER

January 2021



Greetings,

“Force or Violence.”

Those three words are key in determining the legitimacy of protests aimed at any government in the United States. Anyone who attempts to overthrow a government through the use of force or violence has transgressed our laws and our Constitution. We have the right to petition the government for our grievances. We have the right to peacefully assemble. But no one has the right to attempt to overthrow the government through the use of force or violence.

On January 9th, Stephen Whitehead, the National Commander of DAV issued the following statement, posted on the DAV's National website:

“As Veterans who have sacrificed to support and defend the Constitution from all enemies foreign and domestic, DAV abhors and rejects the insurrectionist acts perpetrated at our Capitol on Wednesday [Jan. 6]. DAV has peacefully demonstrated with the support of U.S. Capitol Police, and we mourn alongside them over the death of Air Force Veteran Brian Sicknick. At the same time, we are saddened that any Veteran would desecrate our nation's capital and will take immediate action to initiate the removal of any DAV member found guilty of committing illegal acts against our nation. Such behavior is a disgrace to our national values and must not be tolerated.”

I am grateful that our National Commander has taken this stand. I am also ashamed of the fact that individuals

who have been identified to be Veterans, and some who have been identified as active military, have been alleged to be among the belligerents participating in the recent storming of our nation's Capital. I cannot understand how any man or woman who has sworn an oath and dedicated themselves to the protection and defense of the Constitution of the United States, could act so blatantly in opposition of that very oath, by violently and forcefully storming the People's House.

Commander Whitehead was right to state that any DAV member “found guilty” of such acts would be expelled. We must remember that the majority of those who gathered in Washington, D.C., came to peacefully protest and not to exert force or violence.

As a Vietnam Veteran, I well remember the pain and suffering inflicted upon returning Veterans in the 1960s through the 1980s. I have often counseled young Veterans of the fact that public feelings towards Veterans can be fickle. Already we have seen stories appearing online and in print that cast suspicion on Veterans in general, and not just those few that have participated in rogue acts. The wide brush that bloggers and journalists use when making such statements about “Veterans” reaches us all. It has been suggested that militia groups are comprised of malcontented Veterans. It has been suggested that Veterans harbor a love for guns and are prone to violence.

These are dangerous and patently false assertions. And no one knows this better than we Veterans who have witnessed the violence and evil that emanates from the hands of false prophets and degenerate potentates. No one understands the true cost of liberty better than we, and no one is more dedicated to protecting and defending the basis upon which our freedom and liberty thrive. We cherish peace because we have seen war. We embrace order and equitable laws because we have witnessed disorder and

lawlessness. We defend diversity and the rights of all citizens, all races, all religions and all thoughts because we have seen, with our own eyes, the suppression and suffering inflicted upon people in nations that have no such rights.

While there are people who committed crimes and offenses who also happen to be Veterans, they do not, by any stretch of the imagination, represent what it is to be a Veteran of the United States military any more than a man convicted of a crime who happens to be a parent represents all fathers or an imprisoned banker represents all bankers.

Yet there are those in the media who would suggest otherwise. And therein lies a danger to us all.

I lost friends in Vietnam. I know that many of you have suffered the same losses in the many wars and battles fought since then. In the Vietnam era, the public came to believe those sacrifices were meaningless. They were not. I know this because I made a promise to live the rest of my life in a manner that would bring honor to those who lost their lives. As Veterans, we must understand that we represent all who have served. We never asked for such a distinction, but it is there nonetheless. My actions and your actions will, for better or worse, reflect upon all Veterans because we are, and always will be, identified as Veterans.

As such, we speak for those who can no longer speak. We act for those who can no longer act. And we live our lives for those who sacrificed their own.

Live your life honorably. Live your life well.

Sincerely,

John J. Fanning
Commander

GENERAL NEWS ITEMS

Chapter 84 Rolls Out Virtual General Meetings and Virtual Private NSO Meetings

Chapter 84 hosted its first General Virtual Meeting on January 15th, inviting Veterans to participate on Google Meets or through a live stream on YouTube. Two National Service Officers (NSOs), Bennie Fugate and Tim Alexander, were online to privately and securely counsel members and potential members on their health needs and compensation claims. Veterans were directed to fill out an NSO meeting request and to submit it prior to or during the general meeting. Following the meeting, those Veterans were contacted through the “chat” bar to click on a link which took them into a private meeting with the NSO to discuss their problems or to receive status on their claims. These private meeting “rooms” allowed our NSOs and the Veterans to speak securely and in private in the same manner as if they were seated together at a table inside an office.

At the same time, the membership was meeting through the Google Meets application, as well as live streaming the meeting to the DAV Chapter 84 Channel on YouTube. This allowed meeting guests over the 250 capacity on the Google Meets application to view the proceedings of the meeting and to participate live through the chat bar on YouTube. Veterans could also request a private meeting through the YouTube channel as well as from the Google Meets Web meeting.

The proceedings of the meeting were recorded and remain available at the Chapter 84 YouTube Channel so that Veterans and visitors who could not attend the meeting can still view the proceedings.

“We expected to run into some bumps during this first virtual meeting,” John Fanning, Commander of Chapter 84 said. “But it actually went off very well.” Fanning went on to state that the Chapter has hosted virtual meetings for its Officers for several months, and that this experience laid the groundwork for bringing a virtual meeting to the general membership.

“I don’t think we will ever not host our meetings virtually again,” Fanning said. “Even when we start up our in-person meetings again.” The Chapter is now tentatively planning to resume in-person general meetings on March 5th, 2021, at the South Chicago Elk’s Lodge in Crestwood, Illinois, a near suburb of Chicago.

Fanning explained that DAV 84 has a number of disabled Veterans that it has assisted from distances as far away as Alaska. “We have disabled Veterans who live full time in their RVs, traveling throughout the U.S., Mexico and Canada, or on boats sailing the world’s oceans. We also have disabled Veterans who reside in other countries because the

lower cost of living makes it possible for them to live on the frugal compensation they may be receiving from the VA. Regardless of where they are, we hope to provide them with the services they need and the opportunities that come from membership in the DAV,” he said. “We have the technical ability and willingness to bring our meetings to disabled American Veterans anywhere in the world and to assist them in finding and receiving the help they need — it’s time we put it into practice,” he concluded.

Fanning explained his plans to video and live stream in-person general meetings once they again start up, and to provide the technical ability for distance viewers to participate in the meetings live via the Internet or by cell phone. The Chapter will also provide distant participants the opportunity to meet one-on-one with a Service Officer via private, virtual rooms so that they can privately and securely submit claims to the Veterans Administration or seek other help they may require.

“We are in the business of providing cost-free assistance, delivered by Veterans to Veterans,” Fanning said. “This is the 21st century, and it is time to use the technology we have to offer that help to every American Veteran regardless of where they are in the world.”

Important Dates



February 2021

**Please call before attending any community events. It is likely that they will be postponed or canceled as a result of the coronavirus. You can find CDC coronavirus information at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus); AARP has additional resources at [aarp.org/coronavirus](https://www.aarp.org/coronavirus).*

February 2 - Veterans Food Pantry

11:00am
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center
820 South Damen Ave.
Chicago, IL 60612

February 4 - Veterans Food Pantry

10:00am
Edward J. Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
5000 South 5th Avenue
Hines, IL 60141

February 4 - Hines Virtual Veteran Recreation Therapy Open Mic

12:30pm
Edward J. Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
5000 South 5th Avenue
Hines, IL 60141

February 9 - Veterans Food Pantry

11:00am
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center
820 South Damen Ave.
Chicago, IL 60612

February 11 - Veterans Food Pantry

10:00am
Edward J. Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
5000 South 5th Avenue
Hines, IL 60141

February 11 - Hines Virtual Veteran Recreation Therapy Open Mic

12:30pm
Edward J. Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
5000 South 5th Avenue
Hines, IL 60141

February 16 - Veterans Food Pantry

11:00am
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center
820 South Damen Ave.
Chicago, IL 60612

February 18 - Veterans Food Pantry

10:00am
Edward J. Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
5000 South 5th Avenue
Hines, IL 60141



GENERAL NEWS ITEMS

Illinois Veterans Residing in State Veteran Homes Need Uplifting Messages

While we are all feeling the effects of the COVID quarantine, our Veterans living in one of the four homes operated by the Illinois Department of Veteran Affairs are feeling the pain more deeply than we. Nearly 1,000 Veterans reside in these homes and are unable to get out for day trips, or even come into contact with visitors.

You can help by organizing a letter-writing campaign, sending banners and other items to wish our state Veterans well during this crisis. Below is the list and contact information for our Veteran homes. If you can take the time to write or organize a writing campaign with school children or other groups in your community, please do. These Vets need to hear from you and have their spirits lifted.

Illinois Veterans' Home at Anna

792 N. Main Street, Anna, Illinois 62906
C/O: Anthony Barnett
Anthony.Barnett2@illinois.gov

Illinois Veterans' Home at LaSalle

1015 Oconor Avenue, LaSalle, Illinois 61301
C/O: Susan Scully
Susan.Scully@illinois.gov

Illinois Veterans' Home at Manteno

1 Veterans Drive, Manteno, Illinois 60950
C/O: Dave Pedersen
David.W.Pedersen@illinois.gov

Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy

1707 N. 12th Street, Quincy, Illinois 62301
C/O: Sara Colgrove
Sara.Colgrove@illinois.gov

Prince Home at Manteno

1 Veterans Drive, Manteno, Illinois 60950
C/O Wali Lewis
Wali.Lewis2@illinois.gov



DAV 84 Takes to the Road With New Mobile Office

The membership of DAV 84 voted unanimously at its January general meeting to purchase a mobile office that will be used to bring DAV services to Veterans throughout Illinois. The mobile office, currently being used by the DAV Department in Missouri, will be purchased from them by the Chapter and put to use by Chapter and National Service Officers immediately.

Built on a Ford 350 chassis, the mobile office can easily accommodate two service officers and visiting Veterans in a comfortable and private office setting. The Chapter plans to send its officers on the road to the many small municipalities throughout Illinois, as well as to the numerous unincorporated areas within the state, to offer assistance to disabled Veterans and their families.

There are 1,299 municipalities in Illinois — more than any other state in the union. There are also tens of thousands of Illinoisans residing in unincorporated areas throughout the state. Only a very minute number of those areas offer access to a DAV service officer for the disabled Veterans residing there.

Plans call for the Chapter to forge partnerships with small municipalities and retail establishments to host visits from DAV 84 to their towns and villages throughout the state of Illinois. Veterans in those locations will be offered the free assistance that DAV provides to all American Veterans who need help because of wounds, illnesses and disease they obtained or contracted as a result of their service in the United States armed forces.

“We anticipate receiving support from the officials within these small towns to spread the word to their citizens when we plan to visit,” John Fanning, Commander of DAV 84 said. “We also hope to attract partners in retail or business establishments in the state to help sponsor a one- or two-day Veterans event that might allow us to set up our mobile office in their parking lots to take care of local Veterans in need,” he said.

“Bringing assistance to disabled Veterans is a serious need that is sorely neglected in every state,” Fanning said. “Our rural communities simply don’t have the resources available to assist disabled Veterans, and this is a first step towards turning that around.”

Additional information and photos of the mobile office can be viewed at the Chapter’s website at www.DAV84.org.

NSO REPORT



Ben Fugate, 2nd Vice Commander

I will be online virtually with the link provided in this newsletter, and I will be able to have one-on-one video meetings, all to go over claims, questions, status, and other items.

In response to this unprecedented event, we are establishing a COVID-19 Relief Fund to provide a one-time payment of \$250 to service-connected disabled veterans who have lost employment or self-employment income.

If you are interested in applying, please go to <https://www.dav.org/covidrelief/>. This link will also be available at the end of this newsletter.

-Ben Fugate, NSO Supervisor

YOUR DAV84 OFFICERS

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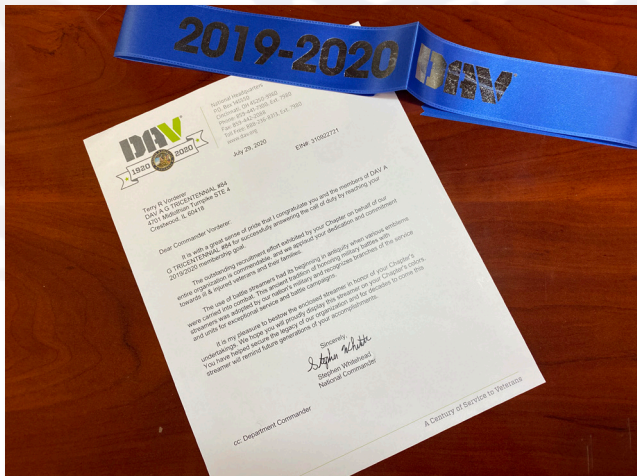
chaplain@dav84.org

FULFILLING OUR PROMISES TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

AUXILIARY

Did you know that our full chapter name is: Disabled American Veterans, Alfred Grajek Tricentennial, Chapter 84?

Alfred Grajek, who our chapter is named after, served in the Army Air Corp during World War II as a Radar Technician in the India-Burma Theater. Following the War, Al became an active member of several veterans' organizations including the DAV. He was named the 50th Imperil Golden Rodent of the National order of Trench Rats – an honorary order founded by disabled veterans following the first World War. Al was also a Department Commander of the DAV and played a significant role in bringing the Eternal Flame Veterans Memorial to Worth, Illinois. He was a long time barber and owned the Veterans Barber Shop originally in the Roseland area of Chicago, and then in suburban Worth. Al passed away of a heart attack while attending the dedication of the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. His name was adopted by our Chapter in honor of his work for veteran causes.



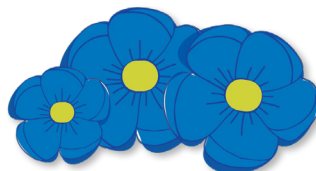
FORGET-ME-NOTS

DAV 84 Officers Vote to Suspend Forget-Me-Not Drive for Remainder of 2020

The Forget-Me-Not fundraising drive has been suspended for the remainder of 2020, in accordance with a motion unanimously carried by DAV 84 Officers at their November Meeting.

While the Forget-Me-Not fundraiser is an essential tool necessary to carry out the mission of DAV 84, the threat of exposure to our volunteers from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the reluctance of contributors to come in close contact with our volunteers makes undertaking the drive too difficult and dangerous.

Officers are looking at several suggestions that may offer an alternative fundraising method, but no final decision has been made.



FORGET-ME-NOT



www.dav84.org