

LEGISLATION

We recognize that one of the important functions of the Disabled American Veterans and its Auxiliary is to influence legislation favorable to the needs of its members. We must also keep in mind that this desirable legislation is brought about by the individual efforts of these members in carrying out their roles as citizens. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us as citizens and members to keep our state and national elected representatives informed of our needs and thoughts. Local units can give valuable assistance in carrying out these ends. The purpose of this section is to offer guidance in this area of endeavor.

As auxiliary members, it is our duty to follow the leadership of our parent organization as to what legislation to oppose and what legislation should be sponsored. The very best sources of information is our DAV magazine and the website for the DAV (www.dav.org). The whole magazine contains the latest information concerning veterans' benefits. Pay special attention to the Commander's Viewpoint and the Adjutant's Report; they both contain the most current information. When an important piece of legislation is being considered, it is always discussed in the magazine and identified with the bill number of the legislation. This detailed explanation allows you to write a clear and concise letter to your Senator and Representative.

There could be times when the Department Commander of the Parent Organization gets out newsletters to Units on pending state or national matters and, at such time, it is the responsibility of the Unit Legislative Chairman to call members immediately and give them the important message because the next meeting night could be too late.

Remember, the legislation we are interested in is legislation to do with the veteran and their families. Our Parent Organization depends on the Auxiliary to do much of the

letter writing. They tell us we are the letter writers so we will have to live up to their trust.

Keep alert and let's be ready for anything that the DAV National Legislative Director asks for us to help with in letter writing. Remember, that in helping the disabled veteran we are also helping ourselves and our families.

Letter writing is not an easy thing for some of us to do and much of the time we wonder who will listen to us; but we have proven how effective we can be with the help and proper information from our Parent Organization. Let's work with them and whenever needed, write to our legislators.

TIPS ON HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

Personal Visit:

Nothing is more effective than face-to-face communication. Of all forms of interaction, the personal visit is the best way for two people to have a serious and meaningful exchange of views. A visit by one or two DAV/DAVA members makes a bigger and more lasting impression than the same number of letters.

A few tips:

- Make an appointment by calling or writing your legislator. You'll be dealing with a staff member, so be prepared to state the reason or purpose of the visit.
- Be prepared. Know what you want to say and how you want to say it in advance of the meeting. If it will help, have a "practice run" with a friend before your visit.
- Be on time for the meeting. Your legislator may keep you waiting, but you certainly do not want to make a negative impression on him or her.

- Be polite.
- Be firm.
- Be confident.
- Be brief getting your point across.
- Don't do all the talking.
- Listen carefully to your legislator.
- Follow up the meeting with a thank you note.

THE LETTER

The letter is by far the most important communication tool that we can utilize to present our views to our elected officials.

A few tips:

- Address your letter to the Washington, D.C., or local office of your legislator.
- Personalize your letter. That is, use your own words and avoid postcards and/or "form letter" type of communications.
- Know the issue you are discussing and have your facts in order.
- Be as brief as you can and still make your point. Lengthy letters are prone to be "skimmed."
- Focus on one issue. Don't clutter up your letter with a lot of extemporaneous information and comment.
- Be polite and civil. No one likes to be insulted.
- Ask for a response to your concern.
- Write often. Urge others to write. Keep on writing. Don't get discouraged. Sometimes it takes a long time for a reply.

FACT SHEET ON LEGISLATION

Envelope to a Senator is addressed as follows:

The Honorable John/Jane Doe
 United States Senate
 Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Salutation is as follows:

Dear Senator Doe:

Envelope to a Representative is addressed as follows:

The Honorable John/Jane Doe
 United States House of Representatives
 House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Salutation is as follows:

Dear Congressman Doe
 Dear Congresswoman Doe

Proper closing for both:

Sincerely,
 or
 Very truly yours

SUGGESTED STATEMENTS TO REQUEST APPROVAL OF A PROPOSED BILL

Para. 1.

A. To support an orderly and prompt consideration of S _____
 or H.R. _____
(give correct number of bill)

B. Your support of S _____
 or H.R. _____
(give correct number of bill)
 is most urgently solicited.

C. Your support of S _____
or H.R. _____
(give correct number of bill)
is most urgently requested.

Para. 2.

This bill, which proposes to (state the basic purpose of bill), will (state results of passage of bill).

SUGGESTED STATEMENTS TO OPPOSE A BILL

Para. 1.

A. Your opposition of S _____
or H.R. _____
(give correct number of bill)
is urgently solicited.

B. Your opposition of S _____
or H.R. _____
(give correct number of bill)
is most urgently requested.

Para. 2.

This bill if passed (state the basic purpose of bill) will affect (state results if bill is passed).

SUGGESTED UNIT LETTER ON LEGISLATION

United States Senator
of _____(State)
The Honorable John/Jane Doe
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator _____:

Or

United States Representative
of _____ District # _____
The Honorable John/Jane Doe
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Salutation:

Dear Congressman Doe:
Dear Congresswoman Doe:

As a member of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, I ask you to support an orderly and prompt consideration of Senate Bill S _____ or H.R. Bill _____

(State the reason why this particular bill or bills is being requested at this time and what it will mean to the veterans and their families.)

Sincerely,
or
Very truly yours,

IMPORTANT

1. Get to know your congressman. Read about him/her and keep a track record of how he/she votes. If possible, get to know him/her personally.
2. Use the proper address and the proper salutation shown above. Spell their name correctly. Always use First Class mail.
3. Increase your influence by identifying yourself as:

- A voter, campaign contributor, party worker, etc.
- A taxpayer, businessman, housewife, stockholder, homeowner, etc.
- An active citizen, member of service organization (DAVA), a civic organization, a religious organization, etc.

When writing a congressman other than your own, mention any connection you might have and why you are writing.

DUTIES OF THE UNIT LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN

1. Be sure to have a Unit Legislative Chairman.
 2. Each Unit Legislative Chairman should give a report at each meeting and should get their information from the DAV sections of the DAV magazine. There are the legislative bulletins that are sent to the unit at the end of the month mailing from National Headquarters. Also you can write to DAV Legislative Headquarters in Washington, DC, and asked to be put on their mailing list.
 3. Should take time to instruct the unit members on how to write letters to their Senators and Representatives.
 4. Keep an accurate record of unit activities, such as letters, telegrams, and contacts with representatives.
 5. Be sure that the members reporting contacts with representatives are only counting contacts made regarding legislation concerning Veterans' affairs.
 6. Keep a record of the bills by name, number and subject matter that the unit has sent letters requesting support or dissent. This makes the reporting of your legislative activities accurate for your reports for national conventions.
 7. Notify National Headquarters upon elections of new officers each year so that the unit can receive any legislative information sent by National Headquarters.
2. Be sure to fill in your unit name and the unit number and the state.
 3. The report must be signed by the unit commander and/or chairman.
 4. If you have no activity in some areas you do not have to fill in the blanks. Be sure to fill in what you have done.

Hopefully some of this information will help you to understand the Legislative program of the Disabled American Veterans and the role that the Auxiliary plays.

If any additional information is needed, please write to your National Legislative Chairman through National Headquarters. Above all you must act and not have an attitude of "I DON'T CARE." It's up to us.

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN MAKING OUT NATIONAL REPORTS

1. Unit report must be postmarked not later than the date specified on the report.

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

