

From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER WILLIAM CRAIG JOHNIKEN



Let's make the Hill listen

DAV and DAV Auxiliary hit the ground running at this year's mid-winter conference, held in the nation's capital in late February.

Members of our organization have been urged to speak on our behalf and to act in our best interests. It's vital we hold lawmakers accountable regarding the passage of laws that provide positive life changes for veterans and their families—and perhaps even more so when they attempt to pass laws that would negatively impact our community.

I sat proudly beside DAV National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster as she testified before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees, leaving no doubts in the minds of legislators on our views regarding the right reforms to the Department of Veterans Affairs Choice Program. DAV and other veterans service organizations have conducted research that clearly illustrates the best way to improve health care for veterans is an integrated approach that combines the

strength of the VA system with the best of private care.

The commander also discussed a subject very close to the hearts of the Auxiliary: support for caregivers of all eras. Legislation is currently pending that, if enacted, would rightfully expand caregiver benefits to veterans of all eras. Legislation like this has died in committee on several occasions, largely due to cost concerns. Providing comprehensive caregiver support to all veterans would indeed have a price tag, but it is far less than what it costs to provide nursing home or other institutional care.

We need to follow through and ensure the men and women we elected know how we expect them to vote regarding these matters. Use DAV CAN (Commanders Action Network) to tell your representatives where you stand. You can also use this tool to keep track of how your representatives vote and hold them accountable for their actions—or inaction. Let's use this powerful tool on behalf of our veterans and caregivers.



Auxiliary National Commander Testimonial Dinner

■ Auxiliary National Commander Craig Johniken's testimonial dinner is scheduled for April 14 at El Tropicano Riverwalk Hotel in San Antonio.

A golf outing at Willow Springs Golf Course is scheduled for Friday, April 13. The cost will be \$48 for 18 holes and a cart.

Cocktail hour for the commander's testimonial dinner begins at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 14. Dinner will begin at 7 p.m. The cost of dinner is \$50. Mail checks, for receipt no later than April 1, to Darlene Spence, 7919 Yellow Bark Blvd., San Antonio, TX 78154.

The deadline for hotel reservations is March 12. Call 210-223-9461 and ask for the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary testimonial room block.