



From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANCES J. COSTA

Farewell and best wishes

As I reflect back on the past year, I marvel at the caliber of people I've met as I attended conventions, conferences, testimonials, the annual mid-winter conference and other events while serving as your DAV Auxiliary Commander.

We don't know for certain when the demands on our nation's servicemen and women will lessen, but we do know that as long as there is a need to send our bravest overseas, there will also be a need to support them when they return home, forever changed by military service.

This is why DAV and the DAV Auxiliary must remain strong—and why our Auxiliary in particular must continue to champion the cause of caregivers.

I announced at the beginning of my tenure that caregivers were near and dear to my heart, as many of our Auxiliary members have personal experience with this issue.

Not very long ago, DAV National Commander Dave Riley shared the impact his wife and primary caregiver, and my good friend, Yvonne Riley, has on his life daily.

While Yvonne would be the first person to tell us that post-9/11 caregivers are very deserving of the support the government provides, she would also probably say that being a caregiver does not get easier with age.

An arbitrary date on the calendar prevents Yvonne, and thousands of others who have cared for veterans decades before 9/11, from accessing

life-changing benefits like medical training, respite care, health and education benefits, and financial support.

Some lawmakers say they hesitate to expand caregiver benefits to caregivers of all generations because of the associated price tag. But according to the VA, comprehensive government support for veteran caregivers, which would allow the veteran to remain at home with their loved ones, costs under \$40,000 per veteran yearly.

In comparison, nursing home care costs well over \$300,000 per veteran every year. It costs taxpayers nearly \$90,000 a year per veteran in a community nursing home and over \$45,000 yearly per veteran in a state run veterans home.

Allowing family caregivers to receive the services and supports they need and deserve, so that severely ill and injured veterans can remain at home, is more than just the right thing to do—it's the smart thing to do.

The founders of this country made a solemn covenant with our veterans when they promised to take care of them. Part of that equation includes the amazing men and women who care for the veterans in their lives every day. I've had the opportunity this year to meet many of these incredible people, and I will forever cherish the stories, challenges and dreams you shared with me.

It has been an honor to serve as your DAV Auxiliary national commander. May God continue to bless America, DAV and the DAV Auxiliary.