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Monthly Newsletter
January 2025

North Central MN Chapter #7
PO Box 564
Bemidji, MN 56619



NEXT MEETING:
DAV Headquarters at

5441 15th Street NW, Bemidji, MN
Monday, January 20 at 5:30pm

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CHAPTER OFFICERS

COMMANDER:	Gene Schwantes - (218) 556-4592
SENIOR VICE:	Darrel Baltzell
JUNIOR VICE:	Tom Annonson
ADJUTANT:	Jeff Meyer
SERVICE OFFICERS:	Tom Annonson - (218) 251-3025
TREASURER:	Jeri Harvey
CHAPLAIN:	Mike Gutz - (218) 444-5015
JUDGE ADVOCATE:	Ward Sutton
SERGEANT AT ARMS:	Bruce Tiegen
OFFICER OF THE DAY:	Glenn Agard
LEGISLATIVE OFFICER:	Joe Vene
HISTORIAN:	Vacant
EXEC. COMMITTEE:	Bruce Tiegen, Gary Guggenberger, Andy Staudt, Henry Hammerback, Jim Pinsonnault

CH. #7 UPCOMING HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

Dec 1st - First Day of Advent	Dec 25th - Hanukkah Begins
Dec 2nd -- DAV Chapter 7 Executive Committee meeting 1630 Hrs.	Dec 26th - Kwanzaa
Dec 5th - Somalia Campaign began in 1992	Dec 31st - Official end of WWII in 1946
Dec 7th - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (Flags at Half Staff until sunset)	DEC 31st - Kosovo Campaign ended in 2013
Dec 8th - War Declared on Japan in 1941	Dec 31st - New Years Eve
Dec 10th - Human Rights Day	Jan 1st -- New Year's Day
Dec 11th - Germany and Italy Declare war on the U.S. in 1941	Jan 2nd - Hanukkah ends
Dec 15th - Iraq War ended in 2011	Jan 6th - Epiphany
Dec 16th -- DAV Chapter 7 Christmas Party at the Eagles Club	Jan 6th -- DAV Chapter 7 Executive Committee meeting 1630 Hrs.
Dec 15th - Bill of Rights Day	Jan 20th - Inauguration Day
Dec 20th - Panama Campaign began in 1989	Jan 20th - Martin Luther King Jr, Day
Dec 20th - U.S. Space force Established in 2019	Jan 20th -- DAV Chapter 7 General Membership meeting 1830 Hrs.
Dec 21st - Winter Begins	Jan 25th - Robert Burns Night (Scottish Poet)
Dec 24th - Christmas Eve	Jan 27th - Victims of the Holocaust Commemoration Day
Dec 25th - Christmas Day	Jan 29th Chinese New Year



COMMANDER'S CORNER

Hello Fellow Veterans,

By the time you are reading this article, half of winter will be over and all that we will have left is just Jan., Feb., and Mar., and then spring is here. Those few months will just fly by, with the exception for those people that support Veterans by picking up the bins and loading the semi on Mon., Tus., and Fri. If you are able, please consider volunteering to help even if it is only once during the entire winter, I know the regular workers will really appreciate the help. Maybe one of the route people could even take a day off if they had a replacement.

Do you know how hard it is to visit with over 100 people in just a few hours? Well, if you were at our annual DAV Christmas Party you would know that it is impossible. For me, I enjoyed every minute of the time I was able to visit with as many people as I could and sorry that I missed the rest. So many people that I only get to see once or twice a year, but so thankful that I get to see so many happy, smiling faces. The party was a great success, great food, great people, and fantastic gifts, so if you missed it, you lost out on a great time, but all is not lost, rumor has it that there will be a super summer picnic and another fantastic Christmas party in 2025!!!

Elections are coming, voting is done in Feb., so get your name in the running to be able to lead such a great Chapter. Only three officers get voted in, but all of the other officer positions are also available, so let it be known if you are interested in any of the positions including the Executive Committee. This is a great opportunity to get more involved and (this is a secret) but it is not that hard or time-consuming.

The Chapter is on track to have a great year, helping Veterans in need of assistance, supporting organizations that support Veterans, supporting the Honor Flights for Veterans to Washington D.C., medical equipment distribution, clothing program collection to EARN the funds that we use to help our Veterans, plus everything else the Chapter does to help our Veterans. **BUT THE ONLY WAY TO BE INFORMED ON WHAT THE CHAPTER IS DOING IS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETINGS, on the 3rd Monday of each month, OR READ THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER.** The Chapter does some pretty wonderful things for its members and non-member Veterans, such as Christmas Parties, Summer Picnics, medical equipment, direct support for in need veterans, \$100.00 paid on member electric bill in Honor of Chapter 100th Anniversary, (I hope the Department will do the same for all of its members for their 100th Anniversary), but the only way to know is Chapter Meetings and Newsletters, **STAY INFORMED!!!!!!**

Remember, if I can be of any help, I am just a phone call away at 218-556-4592.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL
GENE SCHWANTES

AUXILIARY COMMANDER'S CORNER


Hello all,

I hope everyone had a Happy Holidays and look forward to seeing you all again at the March meeting.

Sarah Gast



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DAV CHAPTER 7 CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Chapter 7 Christmas party was held on December 16th at the Eagles Club where 102 members and guests attended. The social hour started at 1700 hours and the opening ceremonies started at 1740 hours. The Colors were posted, and the Pledge of Allegiance was said. After that, the POW/MIA table was presented, and Taps were played.

At that point, Commander Gene Schwantes was introduced and called the meeting to order. He gave a brief update of the things that are currently in the works for the chapter and thanked the many volunteers for their countless hours of help in the various programs that allow us to keep our commitment to helping our fellow veterans and their families.

Gene then introduced our guests of honor, Department 3rd Jr. Vice Commander, Richard Batcho and his wife Dawn. Richard brought Seasons Greetings from the State Commander and the Department.

After that, a motion was made to suspend further business and continue the Christmas party, it was second, and a unanimous vote of aye was heard.

A short interlude of conversations was had while the final preparations for the meal service were finished. After enjoying the meal, the many door prizes were handed out.



DISABLED GOLF CLINIC TESTIMONIAL

This last fall I was fortunate enough to attend the Disabled National Golf Clinic in Iowa City. This event is specifically made available for those veterans that have specific disabilities. Those disabilities include spinal cord injuries, visually impaired and amputees. The clinic started on September 13th. The first day involved being assigned a room, however I had to share a room and that was not an inconvenience whatsoever. There was also an orientation meeting that took place that evening. All the veterans stayed at the Riverside Casino and Resorts. There were approximately 215 veterans that stayed at this location. All meals were at dining areas buffet with plenty of assistance. There was someone to help you plate up. There were people to help get you to your room and the assigned buses.

So, Monday we spent most of the day practicing our swing and correct stance. I've only golfed one time in my life prior to this clinic. All veterans had an assigned golf buddy to assist you in getting set up for your next shot. No matter what situation you find yourself in there is always someone there to help,

Tuesday was as much fun. After getting loaded up on the bus at 7:30 we proceeded to the assigned golf course. There were three different courses that you could be assigned to golf at. The golf course that I golfed was Pleasant Valley Golf Course, very nice and well-groomed. There were sand traps and water holes on the golf course which I found on numerous occasions.

Wednesday was also a full day of golf. We typically had lunch at approximately 11:30 every day at the club house. Lunch took about an hour and then back to golfing until 3:30. Back on the bus we would go back to the hotel. After golfing you had an opportunity to involve yourself in activities that you signed up for at an earlier date. Some of those activities were biking, bowling, air rifle(audio rifle), kayaking, rock climbing, and numerous other activities.

Thursday was the grand finale. It was tournament time that took up the remainder of the day

Friday was a bittersweet day. Time to go home and share these memorable experiences with other vets and family.

I wanted to share this experience with fellow vets in hope that this might arouse some interest. If you are interested in the golf clinic, contact Nick Beelner, the National Disabled Golf clinic director. Nick's number is (319) 358-5963. I hope that I have generated some interest, it's a lot of fun.

Navy Veteran Doug Ellingson

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Greetings to all our brothers and sisters of the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 7 and Auxiliary Unit 7.

Once again, we are taking a break from our discussion of spiritual temperament writings from October 2024, to discuss an issue we have been diligently working upon. This is the true story about Mrs. Pam Stenzel, who came to the Bemidji Sanford Event Center and Evangelical Covenant Church to offer her life experiences as a person born from a loving mother who was raped. Pam never knew her biological father (never arrested). Yet Pam is now married, has a family of her own, thanks her mother who made the decision for Pam to be born, and while being grateful to God for every day of her life. There are many complex and life-altering changes that took place throughout Pam's life. Just as there are many of the same issues our sisters in arms face who experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST), a tragic and compensated injury by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

There were three documents written in generations past to reflect the wisdom, necessity, security, welfare and reality in the continuance of life. The Holy Bible, Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States all stand for the protection of our lives as citizens. There have been strong forces pushing against the true meaning of these documents and in fact, jeopardizing life in our nation.

There are some politicians who would say we need illegal immigration in order to maintain our population growth for our nation. Yet many of these same people say to not separate families at the border. On the one hand they are concerned about the decrease in population, while at the same time wanting to maintain the welfare of the family. At the same time, some politicians have done everything they could to undermine the very goals they want to achieve. They have followed through with unethical and illogical practices that undermine the population growth of our country and contributed to the separation of our families, while endangering citizens' lives. You may ask, "How could they do this?" Very simple, they change the meaning of words and phrases to make it sound as if they are protecting life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, while ignoring or failing to understand real life consequences.

Some people in our culture have been tricked into thinking a woman's right to choose (her decision) is more important than the actual life of a completely different person (unborn or partially born). They want you to believe the fetus is simply a part of her body and she can do anything she wants with her body as long as the fetus growing into another person is overlooked (intentionally or unintentionally).

Another trick proposed by culture comes from the idea that a baby conceived and born out of rape is a continuous reminder to the mother of the trauma she experienced for the rest of her life. Yet, there are many women who say terminating a pregnancy simply adds to the trauma of being raped because the killing of a viable fetus / partially born infant brings trauma of its' own to the mother. When a person meets Pam Stenzel, email: pstenzel@community4life.com, in order to understand her passion for saving the unborn and partially born, to include instances of rape; the importance of life, circumstances and family becomes very clear. We want anyone (active duty, reserve, family member, etc.) who was injured in the manner described here; to know there is hope and no condemnation, God's desire is to help you heal, provide understanding, counseling and a future (John 3:16-17, Psalm 147:3 & 34:17-18, Jeremiah 29:11)

Blessings,
Mike & Julie Gutz

VETERAN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES PROGRAMS

The following is a list of Organizations that cater to taking Veterans on outdoor events, usually at no cost to Veterans and some offer events that are also available to your family members as well. If you are interested in participating in any of these events and don't have access to a computer have a family member help you get in contact with them. Their contact info is listed on their home pages.

American Heroes Outdoor TV

<https://www.americanheroesoutdoors.com/applications/>

Band of Brothers Outdoors

<https://www.bandofbrothersoutdoors.com/>

Brady Oberg Legacy Foundation

<https://bradyoberglegacyfoundation.org/>

Fishing With Vets

<https://fishingwithvets.org/>

Mandatory Fun Outdoors

<https://mandatoryfunoutdoors.org/>

Middle River Veterans Outdoors

<https://mrveteransoutdoors.com/>

Minnesota Veterans Outdoors

<https://www.mnvetsoutdoors.org/>

Warriors and Walleyes

<https://warriorsandwalleyes.org/>

Wounded Warrior Guide Service

<https://wwgsmn.org/>

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LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

Greetings all,

About 4 weeks ago, I let you all know that The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act had passed the U.S. House. It was sent to the U.S. Senate, where few technical changes were made, and yesterday back to the House for final passage. This important bipartisan bill is now headed to President Biden's desk for his signature.

Below you will find the informational email I sent out four weeks ago letting you know what is included. I would also like to recognize the Minnesota connection to this bill. Rep. Dean Phillips was the author of three parts of this bill with Sec. 201, 202, and 303. Rep. Brad Finstad was the author of the language that made up Sec. 304. All of Minnesota's Representatives and Senators voted in favor of this bill.

Trent C Dilks
Legislative Director
Disabled American Veterans, Dept. of Minnesota
20 West 12th St., 3rd Flr, St. Paul, MN 55155
O: (651) 291.1212 C: (651) 788.3186

OPA AWARD



DAV MN Benefit Protection Team Leader "BPTL", Trent Dilks was selected as the winner for Division II Outstanding Performance in Advocacy "OPA" award. The Department was notified that Trent was selected and will receive this award at the 2025 Mid-Winter Conference in Washington DC.

Congratulations Trent on your hard work and dedication to advocating for the Veterans here in Minnesota.

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NEW BENEFIT ALERT - 100% DISABLED VETERANS



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Jan. 1, 2024 changes to veteran benefits

Veterans with a total service-connected disability will be eligible for new benefits from DVS starting Jan. 1, 2024.

What you need to know

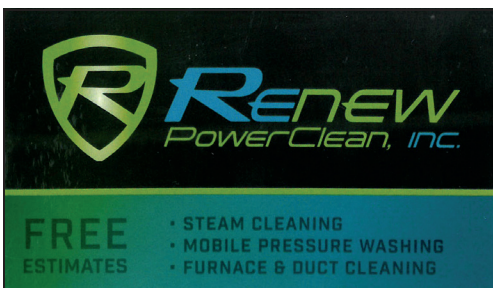
- 100% disabled veterans will be exempt from registration fees (including filing fees) for two vehicles of their choosing. This includes passenger vehicles, non-commercial 1-ton pick-ups, motorcycles and RVs.
- Does not include personalized plate fee, annual contributions for special plates, reinstatement fees or impound fees.
- 100% disabled veterans will be exempt from title fees (including filing fees) for vehicles purchased on or after Jan. 1, 2024.
- Does not include salvage inspections or fast track fees.
- Early renewal/titling (before Jan. 1) is not an option for veterans who would like to take advantage of these benefits.
- 100% disabled veterans will be exempt from driver's license and identification card fees for all types of cards: Standard, REAL and Enhanced.
- Starting July. 1, 2024 100% disabled veterans will also be exempt from paying motor vehicle sales taxes for vehicles purchased on or after that date.

To utilize these benefits bring your award letter or statement of benefits with you to show proof of 100% Service Connection

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POSTED ON SEP 12, 2024, BY JIM MARSZALEK

As DAV benefits advocates, we occasionally hear from veterans who are disappointed after receiving a 0% disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs. While this means you don't get monetary benefits or an increase in your overall compensation, that zero still has value.

It's important to remember that even with a 0% disability rating, which the VA calls a non-compensable disability, veterans may be eligible for benefits that include VA health care, prescriptions, co-payment waivers and federal hiring preferences.

As with all disability ratings, veterans can file for an increase if they think that their disability is more severe than the current rating indicates. If you or any veteran feels like this might be the case, reach out to DAV by visiting benefitsquestions.org so we can assist in a review of symptoms and rating criteria.

Under the PACT Act, hypertension became a new presumptive condition. According to the VA, over 82% of PACT Act-related claims for hypertension have received a 0% disability rating.

A 10% disability rating for hypertension is only assigned if continuous medication is required for blood pressure control and their past diastolic pressure before taking medication was predominately 100 or greater.

Hypertension can lead to serious health conditions over time and can be fatal, especially if left untreated.

We remind all veterans that they should never stop taking prescribed medications prior to any disability evaluations to try and obtain a higher rating.

You can file a claim for a new disability as a secondary claim. This means if a new disability arises that is caused by or linked to a service-connected disability, then service connection and compensation can be awarded even if the original condition is rated as 0% disabling.

Here's an example of when a veteran might file a secondary claim:

A veteran develops heart disease caused by high blood pressure that the VA already concluded was connected to their service. The veteran would get service connection for that heart disease, which could have a higher rating than hypertension.

We know that receiving a 0% disability rating might be confusing or even frustrating, but it's important to know that it still does come with various VA benefits and could be reevaluated for a higher rating in the future.

Again, if you have questions about or need assistance with filing for VA disability compensation, please contact your nearest DAV service office by visiting benefitsquestions.org.

UPCOMING DAV MN OUTDOOR EVENTS

The Minnesota DAV Department's Outdoor program has scheduled their upcoming events and posted them on their website. Check them out at: <https://davmn.org/events-activities/events-for-veterans/>



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THE PACT ACT AND YOUR VA BENEFITS

The PACT Act is a law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve. And starting **March 5, 2024**, we’re expanding VA health care to millions of Veterans—years earlier than called for by the PACT Act.

This page will help answer your questions about what the PACT Act means for you or your loved ones. You can also call us at 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711). And you can file a claim for PACT Act-related disability compensation or apply for VA health care now.

- File a disability claim online
- Apply for VA health care

On this page

What’s the PACT Act and how will it affect my VA benefits and care? What does it mean to have a presumptive condition for toxic exposure? Am I eligible for VA health care under the PACT Act? Gulf War era, and post-9/11, Veteran eligibility, Vietnam era Veteran eligibility, Getting benefits, Toxic exposure screenings, and Information for survivors.

What’s the PACT Act and how will it affect my VA benefits and care?

The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefit expansion in VA history. The full name of the law is The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

The PACT Act will bring these changes:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras
- Adds 20+ more presumptive conditions for burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic exposures
- Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation
- Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care
- Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures

If you’re a Veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits.

What does it mean to have a presumptive condition for toxic exposure?

To get a VA disability rating, your disability must connect to your military service. For many health conditions, you need to prove that your service caused your condition.

But for some conditions, we automatically assume (or “presume”) that your service caused your condition. We call these “presumptive conditions.”

We consider a condition presumptive when it’s established by law or regulation.

If you have a presumptive condition, you don’t need to prove that your service caused the condition. You only need to meet the service requirements for the presumption.

Am I eligible for VA health care under the PACT Act?

You’re eligible to enroll now—without needing to apply for disability benefits first—if you meet the basic service and discharge requirements and any of these descriptions are true for you:

- You served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after 9/11, **or**
- You deployed in support of the Global War on Terror, **or**
- You were exposed to toxins or other hazards during military service at home or abroad

Specific toxins and hazards include burn pits, sand and dust, particulates, oil well or sulfur fires, chemicals, radiation, warfare agents, depleted uranium, herbicides, and other occupational hazards. Find more military exposure categories on our Public Health website

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