



March 8, 2026



March 17, 2026

March 2026

DAV DISPATCH

News from Adam Klein Chapter #3, Bismarck, North Dakota

OFFICERS

Commander:

Lamar Kruckenberg

Sr. Vice Commander:

Tom Newton

Jr. Vice Commander:

David Schall

Chaplain:

Leslie Ross

Treasurer/Adjutant:

Mark Landis

Auxiliary Commander:

Linda Otto

Auxiliary Adjutant

Bonnie Leingang

MEETINGS

1st Thursday, 7 p.m.

4023 State Street

Bismarck, ND

EMAIL

aklein3dav@gmail.com

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 915

Bismarck, ND 58502-0915

Freedom Riders Ready for Bike Show, Charity Auction

The 45th Annual Freedom Riders Motorcycle Classic, including a charity auction, will kick off at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 28th at the Bismarck Hotel & Conference Center. There will be a great display of classic and newer motorcycles, multiple vendors, and a bicycle give away for children. The biggest event on Saturday afternoon will be the charity auction. Our chapter will receive a significant portion of the proceeds. The DAV Honor Guard will present colors prior to the auction. The Freedom Riders have supported our chapter since 2007.



VA Expands Dental Services With 2-Year Pilot Program

The Fargo VA is one of the sites chosen to participate in a new pilot dental program. This program expands services to some (not all) veterans who do not currently qualify for VA dental care, and does not replace any other dental care eligibility that is now offered by the VA. The program is scheduled to run for two years. Care may be provided by local dentists under agreements with the VA. Details are still being worked out, but here is what we know regarding eligibility under the pilot program. A veteran must meet all of the following criteria:

- **Enrollment in the VA Health Care System**
- **Assigned to Priority Group 1 or Priority Group 2**
- **No existing VA dental eligibility**
- **Clinical need for dental care**
- **Attended a VA primary care appointment within the past 12 months**
- **Clinical diagnosis of Ischemic Heart Disease/Coronary Artery Disease (service connection not required)**

The VA will attempt to contact eligible veterans by email or text. Eligibility will be determined on a case by case basis. If you want to know about your own eligibility status, please contact your County Veterans Service Officer, who can inquire on your behalf.

Chaplain Chats

As March arrives wearing its shades of green, we're reminded that hope is a color we can choose to see – sometimes in clover fields, sometimes in camouflage, and often in one another. St. Patrick's Day began as a story about resilience: a person carried far from home who chose purpose over bitterness, service over despair. That spirit feels familiar to us. Many of our veterans know what it means to stand in unfamiliar terrain and still move forward with courage. Many of our volunteers know what it means to show up - again and again - long after the headlines fade. So this month, in a bit of Irish whimsy, may we find our own "four leaf clovers":

- One leaf for **courage**, the kind that asks for help and offers if freely.
- One leaf for **companionship**, because no veteran should walk alone.
- One leaf for **compassion**, steady and practical, the kind that drives someone to an appointment or helps file a claim.
- And one leaf for **commitment**, the quiet resolve that keeps our mission moving forward.

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Message from the Commander

It seems like 2026 has just begun but we are already into the third month. We had a great time in February serving community meals. That has become a very popular public service program and we will schedule more in the near future. We will also need volunteers to represent our DAV chapter during the Freedom Riders bike show in late March. Watch your emails for opportunities to serve. Planning also continues for the Department Convention in May. I would like to publicly thank Leslie Ross for representing me as department commander during the recent DAV Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, DC. Good things are happening in the DAV.

LaMar Kruckenberg, Commander

*****DAV Mid-Winter Conference Report on Page Two*****

Visit us at <https://www.aklein3dav.org>

Keeping Our Promise to America's Veterans

DAV Chapter 3 Legislative Update – The Why Behind Our Advocacy

On February 23, DAV National leadership joined ND Judge Advocate Mike Dobmeier, ND Adjutant Joe Hall, and ND Benefits Protection Team Leader Leslie Ross in meetings with Ryan Kenyon from Senator Kevin Cramer's office and Representative Julie Fedorchak. A scheduled meeting with Senator Hoeven was postponed due to State of the Union security; follow-up will occur by phone. We advocated for DAV's 9 Critical Policy Goals and were invited to attend Commander Coleman Nee's testimony before the Joint Armed Services Committee, reinforcing these priorities nationally.

Protecting VA Infrastructure and Direct Care

The VA health system was largely built after World War II. Many facilities now average nearly 60 years old, and inconsistent capital funding created a major maintenance backlog. For rural North Dakota veterans, this directly affects access to specialty care and continuity within VA's integrated direct-care model.

- S.1846 – VA Design-Build Construction Enhancement Act of 2025
- S.2988 – VITAL Act of 2025

Improving VA Claims Accuracy and Fairness

After post-9/11 backlogs, VA modernization improved speed, including nearly 3 million claims processed in FY2025. However, complex forms, effective date penalties, unclear letters, and avoidable appeals persist. Reform must prioritize accuracy and clarity — not speed alone.

- S.1311 / H.R.1039 – Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act
- H.R.3983 – Veterans Claims Quality Improvement Act

Mental Health, Suicide Prevention & Women Veterans' Health

VA's wraparound suicide prevention model integrates care coordination, housing, and employment support. Yet more than 17 veterans per day still die by suicide nationally. Rural workforce shortages make access difficult for North Dakota's 58,000 veterans.

- S.609 / H.R.6024 – BRAVE Act of 2025
- H.R.3863 – VA Mental Health Outreach & Engagement Act

Emerging research links perimenopause and menopause with increased depression and suicide risk in vulnerable populations. Evidence-based menopause care and appropriate Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) are preventive mental health strategies supported by DAV.

Survivor Benefits, Toxic Exposure & Retiree Equity

DIC provides surviving spouses approximately 41% of a veteran's 100% disability rate, compared to 55% for federal civil service survivors. DAV supports eliminating this disparity and the DIC remarriage penalty. Concurrent receipt offsets reduce earned retired pay for many medically retired and lower-rated career retirees. Restoring fairness honors earned service.

- S.410 / H.R.1004 – Love Lives On Act of 2025
- S.611 / H.R.680 – Caring for Survivors Act

- S.1032 / H.R.2102 – Major Richard Star Act
 - H.R.303 – Retired Pay Restoration Act
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In-person advocacy ensures lawmakers understand the policy history and real-world impact on North Dakota veterans and families. I encourage you to review DAV's 9 Critical Policy Goals and become a member of the DAV CAN (Commander Action Network). Scan the QR code to join and make your voice heard.



Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Ross

ND DAV Benefits Protection Team Leader (BPTL)

Chaplain Chats (*Continued*)

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If there is any leprechaun's gold to be found, perhaps it is this: a phone call returned, a benefit secured, a ride given, a hand extended. Our treasure is not hidden at the end of a rainbow - it's found in service.

May we carry a little lightness this month. May laughter echo in our meetings. May gratitude steady our work. And may we continue to build a community where every veteran is seen, heard, and supported - not by luck, but by design.

Here's to green hills, open hearts, and the enduring mission that binds us together.

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Leslie Ross, Chaplain