

National Candidates for 2008-2009

The following information is intended to inform the membership about the announced candidates for National Office. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement by the National Organization of any candidate to the exclusion of others who may stand for election. DAV members may announce their candidacy at any time, up to and including the time of our election at our National Convention in Las Vegas, Aug. 9-12.

To date, nine DAV members have announced their candidacy for National Office for the 2008-2009 membership year. Elections will take place Tuesday, Aug. 12, at the National Convention in Las Vegas, Nev. Biographical information presented below is offered to better acquaint you with the announced candidates.

Announcing he will seek the office of National Commander, National Senior Vice Commander Raymond E. Dempsey said, “The opportunity to help build better lives for America’s disabled veterans and their families is among the most exciting challenges of my life. As your National Commander, I will accept this leadership challenge and pledge myself to upholding the mission of our great organization.

“I know we can achieve any goal through understanding, compassion, aggressive advocacy and superior service to veterans and their families. I will always strive to achieve this with maximum effectiveness.



Raymond E. Dempsey

“We live in a challenging world embroiled in war and disaster, which often places our nation’s military men and women in harm’s way and leaves many disabled as a result. It is those disabled men and women the DAV is chartered to represent by every effective means possible. To continue our legacy of unsurpassed service, I will strive to strengthen our service, quality, integrity and leadership more than ever before. Our members expect such leadership, and I shall do all in

my power to meet their expectations.

“I pledge to be there for the men and women who are disabled in service to our nation. I will embrace the needs and advocate for all disabled veterans — those fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the world; those serving in other hostile areas; disabled veterans of past wars, such as World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf; and those men and women in uniform who defend our borders and waters.



Barrera



Tyson



Samuels



Polzin

“Our mission requires teamwork and diligence, and both are strengthened by our Strategic Plan, which serves as a beacon to guide us in every aspect of our work on behalf of disabled veterans and their families. I support our Strategic Plan and will work to enhance its effectiveness.

“From our legislative efforts striving to influence fair and necessary benefits and services for disabled veterans and their families to the highly effective and superior services provided by our corps of National Service Officers and Transition Service Officers, no one does it better than the DAV. As your National Commander, I will seek and pursue every opportunity to strengthen and enhance our mission of service for disabled veterans and their families.”

At press time, other National Officers seeking election to National Office include Roberto “Bobby” Barrera, Wallace E. “Wally” Tyson, Donald L. Samuels, Larry A. Polzin, Mary J. Bencivenga and Michael Knutson; National Judge Advocate Michael E. Dobmeier; and National Chaplain Dr. Charles W. Edwards, Jr.

Raymond E. Dempsey currently serves as National Senior Vice Commander. He is a service-connected disabled veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force. He enlisted in 1967 and suffered a spinal cord injury while serving as a member of a nuclear, chemical and biological team in 1969, resulting in his medical discharge in 1970.

Dempsey began his life-long commitment to the DAV while undergoing treatment in the hospital at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. He is a life member of Chapter 42, Des Plaines, Ill., and Chapter 12, Henderson, Nev.

At the Chapter level, Dempsey has served in all offices, including Chapter Service Officer and Membership Chairman. He currently serves as Chapter Legislative Chairman and Department Executive Committeeman and has served in all District chairs. At the Department level, he has held a va-

riety of elected and appointed positions, including Inspector General and Legislative Director. He currently serves as Commissioner of the Claims and Service Commission. Nationally, he served as a Finance and Dues Committee advisor, Ex-Officio member of the Service Foundation Board of Directors, 12th District Executive Committeeman and National Finance Committee Chairman. He currently serves as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, is a member of the Service Foundation/Columbia Trust Advisory Committee and is a member of the DAV Benefits Protection Team.

Dempsey earned a bachelor’s degree in political science and modern world history and a master’s degree in administration and supervision. He concluded a 30-year career in education in 2003, retiring as a principal in the Chicago school system.

Roberto Barrera currently serves as National 1st Jr. Vice Commander. He is a service-connected, combat-disabled Vietnam War veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps.

A life member of Chapter 5 in San Antonio and native of Del Rio, Texas, Barrera enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1969. Later that year, he was seriously burned when a bomb exploded by enemy forces beneath an armored personnel carrier in which he was traveling. He was burned over 40 percent of his body, including serious facial burns and the loss of his right hand at the wrist and his left arm at the shoulder.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology at St. Mary’s University, and later, while teaching at Del Rio High School, a master’s degree at Sul Ross State University. Barrera’s career has also included positions of leadership and manage-





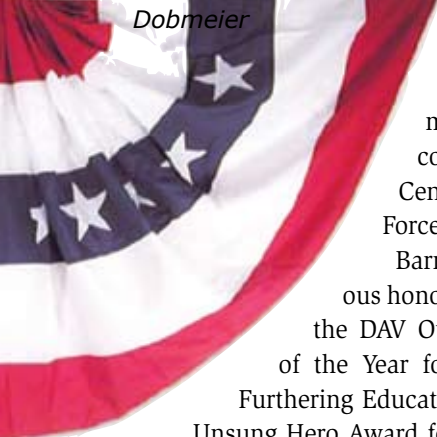
Dobmeier



Edwards



Bencivenga



ment as a juvenile probation counselor and Family Support Center Director at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio.

Barrera is the recipient of numerous honors and awards. They include: the DAV Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year for 1998, LIFE's (Leaders In Furthering Education Foundation) Presidential Unsung Hero Award for 1998, Disabled Veteran of the Year for the State of Texas in 1990 and again in 1998, and Department of Defense Outstanding Employee with a Disability Award for 1997.

Wallace E. Tyson currently serves as National 2nd Jr. Vice Commander. He is a service-connected Vietnam-era veteran with more than 12 years of service in the U. S. Army.

Born in Oak City, N.C., Tyson is a life member of Chapter 46, Fayetteville. Following high school, he attended St. Petersburg Junior College in Clearwater, Fla., before enlisting in the Army in 1972, where his assignments included the 101st Airborne Division, 1st Armored Division and 37th Transportation Group in Germany; 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas; and the U. S. Army Recruiting Command.

He joined the DAV in 1985 following medical retirement as a sergeant first class. He originally served as a Chapter Service Officer and later as Chapter Adjutant.

While serving as a DAV volunteer, Tyson earned his bachelor's degree in business administration from Methodist University at Fayetteville in 1989.

Tyson was appointed Adjutant for the Department of North Carolina in June 1989. At the National level, he has served as 9th District Executive Committeeman, a member of the National Executive and Finance Committees and Chairman of the National Finance Committee. He has served

as a member of the Interim Committee on Constitution and Bylaws, State Commanders and Adjutants Association President (2002-03), and as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Service Foundation. He also served as President of the North Carolina Veterans Council, was selected North Carolina Disabled Veteran of the Year for 1995 and 1996, and was presented with The Order of the Long Leaf Pine by Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. The award is among the most prestigious presented by the Governor.

Donald L. Samuels currently serves as 3rd Jr. Vice Commander. He is a service-connected, combat-disabled veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps in the Vietnam War and is a retired DAV National Service Officer (NSO).

Samuels served in the Marine Corps from 1960 to 1969, when he was discharged due to gunshot wounds received while leading his infantry platoon in a ground assault against North Vietnamese Regulars. His wounds resulted in the partial loss of use of his right hand.

Following the VA vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, Samuels was assigned as Supervisor at the DAV National Service Office in Nashville, serving in that capacity from 1970 until his retirement in 1989.

In addition to his university studies, Samuels completed two years of law school and has attended 12 special finance schools. Since 1989 he has served as the Assistant Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs.

A life member of Chapter 3 in Nashville, Samuels has a wide variety of Chapter and Department positions, including Chapter and Department Commander. He currently serves as Department Adjutant, Hospital Service Coordinator and Department Service Officer Director, as well as being a member of the National Legislative Interim Committee.

Larry A. Polzin currently serves as 4th Jr. Vice Commander. He is a service-connected Vietnam-era veteran who served

in the U.S. Marine Corps.

A native of Colorado, Polzin entered the Marine Corps in 1961 after graduating from high school. Following basic training, he served as a member of the 1st Marine Division, 1st Engineer Battalion, Camp Pendleton, Calif. His service continued in the Marine Corps until disability retirement in 1966.

Polzin joined the professional staff of the DAV as an NSO in 1972 at the Los Angeles National Service Office. He continued to serve disabled veterans and their families as an NSO and was eventually promoted to Assistant Supervisor. He retired in 1998 after more than 25 years of service as an NSO.

A DAV member since 1971, Polzin is a life member of Chapter 73, Woodland Hills, Calif., where he has been active in a variety of positions. At the Department level, he has served as Jr. Vice Commander, Sr. Vice Commander and was elected Department Commander in 1996.

Polzin is actively involved in veterans' issues at the state and national level. His service has included Chairman of the Department of California Finance Committee, National Executive Committee and various other National Interim Committees.

Michael E. Dobmeier currently serves as National Judge Advocate. He was elected to that post during the 2002 National Convention in Dallas.

Prior to being elected National Judge Advocate, Dobmeier was appointed Assistant to the National Judge Advocate in March 2002. He later completed the term of National Judge Advocate then held by Edward G. Galian, who passed away on May 11, 2002.

A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Dobmeier, suffered second- and third-degree burns over more than 30 percent of his body when sprayed with hot oil in an explosion aboard the submarine USS *Trigger* in 1972. Following his discharge from the Navy later that year, Dobmeier signed up as a life member of Chapter 2 in Grand Forks, N.D. His active participation in DAV activities and leadership led him to be appointed or elected to nearly all Chapter and Department offices and positions, including selection as the 1985 DAV Outstanding Member of the Department of North Dakota.

At the National level, he was chosen to serve on the National Executive and Finance Committees in 1994. He was elected National 4th and 3rd Jr. Vice Commander consecutively in 1995 and 1996, National 1st Jr. Vice Commander in 1997, National Senior Vice Commander in 1998, and National Commander in 1999.

A successful business owner, Dobmeier is also president of the North Dakota Veterans Home Foundation.

Dr. Charles W. Edwards, Jr. currently serves as National Chaplain. He is a disabled veteran who entered military service in

the U.S. Army in 1966 as an infantryman. Following active duty, he joined the Army Reserve as a chaplain's assistant and served in the Texas Army National Guard, retiring in 2003.

Dr. Edwards is a life member of Chapter 128 in Austin, Texas. He has held the post of Chaplain with various Chapters and served as Chaplain for the Department of Texas for 12 years. He was elected National Chaplain at the 2007 National Convention in New Orleans.

Edwards earned a Master of Ministry degree from the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Ind. He was commissioned as a chaplain in 1976 and again served on active duty with the Army until 1979. He then began service with the Texas National Guard, earning a Doctor of Ministry degree from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

He also served as Chief of Chaplains for the VA's South Texas Health Care system and currently is Chief of Chaplains for the State Guard Association of the United States and was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in 2007.

Also announcing they will seek election to National Office are Mary J. Bencivenga and Michael Knutson.

Mary J. Bencivenga is a service-connected disabled veteran who served in the U.S. Navy as an air traffic controller. She has been a member of the DAV since 1995.

Bencivenga served in the Navy from 1981 to 1987, and was injured while on duty at the Naval Air Station, Barber's Point, Hawaii, during a readiness alert. She was hospitalized for her injuries and was not returned to duty for several weeks. Following her honorable discharge from the Navy as an E-4, Bencivenga continued her education, earning a master's degree in education and embarking on a teaching career that included tutoring students with disabilities.

A life member of Chapter 24 in Toms River, N.J., Bencivenga is a nationally accredited County Veterans Service Officer and volunteers at the Ocean County Veterans Service Bureau near her home. She has held a succession of Chapter and Department offices, including Department Commander and Assistant Adjutant of the Department of New Jersey.

Additionally, she has served as Chapter Legislative Officer and Department Sergeant-at-Arms and has held positions on numerous DAV Committees, including National Convention Credentials Committee Chair for 2005-2007.

Michael Knutson is a service-connected disabled veteran who served in the U.S. Army as a commissioned officer in the medical service corps. He is a life member of Chapter 4, Saginaw, Mich.

After earning his Bachelor of Science from North Dakota State University in 1974, Knutson served in the Army from 1974 to 1996. He spent more than 11 years on active duty and 10 years in the Army Reserve. He retired at the rank


of lieutenant colonel in 1996. His military service included several overseas tours, as well as assignments with the 82nd Airborne Division and the 2nd Armored Division.

Following retirement from the military, Knutson began a career with the VA, where he has served as a Human Resources Management Specialist, Veterans Benefits Administration Rating Specialist and Director of Human Resources at several VA facilities.

Among his many accomplishments, he is the recipient of the 1994 Wisconsin Vietnam Veteran Outstanding Achievement Award and received two commendations from the

Governor of Michigan for efforts in hiring veterans, especially disabled veterans.

Knutson currently serves as Chaplain for the Department of Michigan and as a member of the Department POW/MIA Committee. He has also served as Chapter Chaplain and as a member and chairman of the Department Employment Committee.

The National Convention Committee on Nominations will be available to receive additional candidates who present themselves at the National Convention in Las Vegas beginning Aug. 9, 2008. 

87th DAV-DAVA National Convention

August 9-12

Viva
Las Vegas!

**It's your chance
to be at the
heart of it all!**

Bally's Las Vegas will play host to the 87th DAV/DAVA National Convention. At Bally's you'll be at the heart of the Las Vegas Strip, a short trek from some of the finest dining and entertainment opportunities in the world. And you don't have to be a high-roller to get great rates during your stay.

While they last, rooms are available for just \$108, plus tax, per night. Reservations can be made through Bally's Las Vegas or the DAV website. Inform the Bally's representative that you will be attending the convention.

Registration begins on Thursday, Aug. 7 at 8 a.m. The joint opening session then starts Saturday at 8:30 a.m. The convention closes with the introduction of National Officers and dinner on Tuesday, Aug. 12.

Attendees who need scooters must reserve them in advance. Scooters will be provided through Golden Technologies for \$80.

To request a scooter, forward your name, address, telephone number and DAV chapter or unit affiliation to DAV Deputy Inspector General Mike Walsh toll free at 877-426-2838, ext. 2065, or e-mail mwalsh@davmail.org.

For Room Reservations Call toll free
1-800-634-3434
or visit www.dav.org

Bally's Las Vegas, 3645 Las Vegas Boulevard,
South Las Vegas, Nevada 89109

