Spring National Executive Committee Meetings

Our National Executive Committee meetings began on March 6th to discuss and vote on issues that are important to our organization and to the veteran community. As a non-profit organization that serves veterans, our mission is to ensure that all veterans receive the support and care they need to thrive. On March 8th, our National Commander Don McLean testified before the 118th Congress on several critical topics that directly affect our community. These topics included the PACT Act, Rolling to Remember, and the recognition of our Afghani brothers and sisters.

During his testimony, Commander McLean emphasized the need for increased funding, mental health and wellness resources, round table discussions, and policy changes to address the worsening suicide crisis among our veteran community. He also stressed the importance of addressing women's issues that disproportionately affect female veterans.

As an organization that is dedicated to serving veterans, we stand with Commander McClean and urge policymakers to take action to address these critical issues. Let us continue to advocate for policies and resources that help our veterans thrive.
**Upcoming Events:**

**Employer of the Year**
April 15th - June 1st  
*All submission must be placed online*

**National Scholarships**
Closed as of April 30th  
visit [www.amvets.org/scholarships](http://www.amvets.org/scholarships) for more information

**Quality Department/Post**
May 1st - Jul 30th  
*All submission must be place online*

**Americanism/AADAA Entries**
Deadline July 1st
*Americanism Chairs if you are interested in "Pocket Constitutions" for your program or would like to be a distributor, please contact National Programs at programs@amvets.org or call 301-683-4027/4031 for more information.*

**Freedom Foundation Spirit of America Nomination Forms**
Deadline July 1st

**AMVETS ONE “Leaving No Veteran Behind”**
May 2023  
visit [https://www.amvetsone.com/](https://www.amvetsone.com/) or contact the Department of CA for more information.

**Red Shirt Friday (8 hours reporting)**
Send photos to programs@amvets.org

---

**Do you shop on Amazon? Support AMVETS with every purchase!**

Simply designate AMVETS National Service Foundation as your 'Favorite Charity Organization' by visiting the link below:

[GO TO AMAZON](http://www.amazon.com)
After a three-year absence, the Pentagon's North Lot will officially be the staging area for this year’s Rolling to Remember demonstration ride. As we approach Memorial Day Weekend, an extraordinary motorcycle demonstration ride will take place, commencing from the Pentagon’s parking lot and traversing through the heart of Washington, D.C. The primary objective of this event is to raise awareness about the pressing mental health crisis that has been claiming the lives of thousands of veterans every year. Additionally, we aim to fervently advocate for a thorough and comprehensive investigation into America’s Missing in Action and Prisoners of War, ensuring that their status is fully accounted for.

Rolling to Remember also serves as a reminder of the mission to shed light on the mental health struggles faced by our brave veterans. Over the years, far too many veterans have succumbed to the invisible wounds of war, leading to an alarming loss of life within our veteran community. By organizing this massive motorcycle ride, we strive to bring attention to this critical issue and encourage a broader conversation about the urgent need for mental health support and resources for our veterans.

The Demonstration Ride serves as a powerful platform to amplify this call for action, drawing attention from the public, media, and policymakers alike. As motorcycles rev their engines in the Pentagon’s parking lot, the rumble symbolizes a united front, a collective voice determined to make a difference. Thousands of riders will embark on this poignant journey through the streets of Washington, D.C., bearing flags, banners, and symbols of remembrance. The roar of engines will not only capture the attention of onlookers but also ignite conversations and generate empathy for the challenges faced by our veterans and their families. Together, we ride with purpose, ensuring that the sacrifices and struggles of our veterans are never forgotten. Come Ride with us. Be Heard.
Blazing The Trail

Sandra Durbin has stood up and made an impact for all aspiring military service members just like her

By Nathaniel Chambers

Sandra Durbin is a very accomplished military veteran. If you look at her post-military career alone, you will notice how she paved the way for many to follow along in her footsteps. Durbin was one of the first people to climb telephone poles, and in that she also put in switchboards. She did this for 15 years, setting the tone for women everywhere.

Not only that, but Durbin also went back and got a college degree in Psychology. She even worked in real estate after that as well, all of which were new to people like her during the time she did all this.

"I was a trailblazer and helped women to be more accepted in traditionally male jobs," Durbin said. "After my military service and my job as a Systems Tech for PacTel and AT&T, I spoke at junior highs and high schools to young women about pursuing good-paying jobs and being independent. I am known today by almost all female ATCs as someone to set the pace for women in the military."

Of course, while Durbin helped set a new standard in various places when she retired from the military, she set new standards within the military as well. She worked as an Air Traffic Controller in the US Navy, and she stood out for multiple reasons.

"I served during the Vietnam War," Durbin said. "I am the very first black female Air Traffic Controller in the United States, thanks to the US Navy."

Durbin truly set precedents that were never set before, and she was breaking barriers that had never been broken. She always figured, if no one else was going to be the change, then why not her.

This was not just during a time where very few black women were in the military, but very few women in general were not. Women serving back in the 60s were far and few between, and Durbin was one of the select few.

"Women back then didn't deploy," she said. "After 'A' school, I was stationed at NAS Pensacola, and then NAS North Island."

Durbin served in the Vietnam War as well, and while she knew she was making strides for generations of war heroes to come, the veterans did not get a warm welcome home from the war.

Many of her fellow servicemembers were spat on by anti-war protesters.

Despite all the controversy that surrounds the Vietnam War, Durbin still sees it as a positive, as many veterans know who she is to this very day. Who knows how different the military would look without trailblazers like Durbin.

Thankfully we do not have to think about this.

The precedent Durbin has set is truly amazing, but what is even more amazing is she has a great personality to back it all up. She is not just someone who stood in there and was different than anyone else before her, but she was someone who people genuinely enjoyed being around and helped make all the negatives of war activity seem moot at times.

"My word is my bond," Durbin said. "I am quick witted, enjoy a good joke, and I don't suffer fools well. I am well-traveled, educated and love reading. I have taught sewing, hat making, embroidery and ribbon work for 50-plus years."

Is there anything Durbin cannot do?

On top of it all, she is very giving of her time. Her heart for veterans has always been there, and she does everything she can to give back to the military community.

"I am also a member of the American Legion," Durbin said. "I only volunteer for AMVETS, because, in my opinion, we are the only VSO that requires only an honorable discharge for membership. With the VFW, you have to have had boots on the ground during a war to be a member. With the American Legion, you have to have served during a war."

Regardless, this does not stop Durbin from making a difference within these communities.

She even served as a Post Commander for eight years before becoming the State Commander for AMVETS California.

"I volunteer and give back to my fellow veterans, working StandDowns, cooking, making wellness checks, and trying to set a good example," Durbin said. "I love AMVETS and my AMVETS family. When I was the NEC for our Department, I got to know veterans from all over the U.S., and we all have a common thread: helping veterans."

Helping veterans and making a difference wherever you go. That is what Durbin has been about for basically her entire life, and that is why she is as highly respected as she is. She has set the tone for decades to come, and she cannot wait to see what other important changes the military and its community implement.
During his address, Black presented Congress with compelling data, revealing that there have been 567,000 new claims, with 352,000 claims still pending. This statistical evidence underscored the urgency for action. To enhance clarity in interpreting decisions and ensure transparency throughout the process, Black urged the VA to publish regulations for the PACT Act.

The testimony delivered by Michael Black emphasized the ongoing collaboration between AMVETS and the VA to address challenges and make meaningful improvements. With a shared commitment to better serve our veterans, they strive to overcome obstacles, deliver accurate outcomes, and provide the necessary support to those who have bravely served our nation.
Caring for the disabled and elderly, and the widows and orphans of men who died in the war became a concern even before the Civil War ended. The first national veterans' home in the United States was the United States Naval Home which opened 1834 in the Philadelphia Naval Yard. The Naval Home was moved to Gulfport, Mississippi in 1976.

The first Army National Old Soldiers' Home in the U.S. was established in Washington, D.C. in 1851. General Winfield Scott founded the Soldier's Home in Washington, D.C. and another in Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

The Old Soldier's Home, now known as the Armed Forces Retirement Home, was the site of President Lincoln's Cottage, a 34-room Gothic Revival cottage, which served as Lincoln's summer home during the American Civil War. The Home has remained in continuous use since its establishment. It is located on a 250-acre (1.0 km²) wooded campus overlooking the U.S. Capitol in the heart of Washington, D.C., three miles from the White House, and continues to serve as a retirement home for U.S. enlisted men and women. Both the Washington, D.C. and Gulfport soldiers' and sailors' homes are funded through a small monthly contribution from the pay of members of the U.S. Armed Services.

Last September, I visited the Milledgeville War Veterans Home in Georgia for the first time, and it was an experience that I will never forget. During my visit I met so many interesting people, many wanting to share their stories and some just glad to see a fellow Veteran come visit them. For some of the Veterans, no one comes to visit, which is very sad. These servicemen and women signed the same “Blank Check” that each of us have done, to fight and defend our country, and now many of them sit alone in their beds and wait. Some are waiting for loved ones to come and take them back home, but that may not happen. Some of them are waiting for the next day that hopefully someone will come and share a kind word with them.

For the full story, to visit Chaplain's Corner: www.amvets.org/chaplains-corner
NEW LEADERSHIP AT HQ

DONALD McLEAN
National Commander
Coast Guard Veteran

JOSEPH CHENELLY
National Executive Director
Marine Veteran

JAZMIN HERRING
National Executive Assistant
JHerring@amvets.org

BUMI AYODELE
National Communications Specialist
Media@amvets.org

CAROL HEBERT
National Programs Director
ARMY VETERAN
Programs@amvets.org

WARREN COX
National Membership Director
ARMY VETERAN
MemberSupport@amvets.org

RESOURCES

AMVETS MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONS
membersupport@amvets.org

FILE A VA CLAIM
https://amvets.org/filing-va-claims/

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE
https://amvets.org/prepare-for-employment/

VETERANS CRISIS LINE
Dial 988 (press 1)

MEDIA INQUIRES
media@amvets.org