

A photograph showing a cross-section of soil with numerous green grass plants growing from it. The roots of the grasses are exposed and spread throughout the dark brown soil, illustrating the concept of 'grassroots'.

**Grassroots
Advocacy: DAV MN
Fall Conference**

Before We Get Started: Partisan Activities

- ▶ Do NOT give the impression that the DAV supports or opposes any candidate.
- ▶ Participating in or giving the appearance of partisan activities on behalf of the DAV violates the DAV's Charter, National Constitution and Bylaws, IRS Tax-Exempt status.
- ▶ It is your right as an American to support and participate in the political process. You are encouraged to do so. As a private citizen.
- ▶ Leave the logo wear, DAV caps, etc.. At home for political rallies. It can give the appearance of supporting a partisan politician.
- ▶ Your chapter CAN host candidate forums BUT we must work invite all candidates to participate. Work with DAV MN's Legislative Director if you'd like to host one.

Grassroots and Grasstops: What do we mean?

- ▶ Grassroots: That is most of us. It is the constituents of a lawmaker who are interested in an issue, like Veterans, who can create a strong network to pressure support or action in a favorable way.
- ▶ Grasstops: These are people in your communities who may “have the ear” of lawmakers. Friends, family, large donors, party leaders, etc...
- ▶ If you have a special relationship with a lawmaker please let me know.
- ▶ You do NOT need to be a grasstop to make a difference.

Grassroots Work!

- ▶ There is true power in numbers when it comes to grassroots advocacy. It is a fundamental way in which our legislative system should work.
- ▶ Our best example: The first Veterans Omnibus in MN history!
- ▶ It was not a thing.
- ▶ Nothing was going to happen that session.
- ▶ We called for it at Veterans Day on the Hill (a grassroots event).
- ▶ Thousands of Veterans and supporters advocated for it to their elected officials. (Grassroots in action)
- ▶ They said it couldn't happen.
- ▶ It passed and was signed by the Governor.

Why This is Important to You

- ▶ There is strength in numbers. The more voices speaking as one, the harder we are to ignore.
- ▶ If I don't know you exist, I can't get you the information you need to participate.
- ▶ The best way for you to make yourself know: DAV of MN's MinnFluence Network for Minnesota's issues and DAV's CAN (Commanders Action Network) for Federal Issues.
- ▶ Explain the difference between the two: MinnFluence and CAN
- ▶ We have things we need to get done at both levels.
- ▶ State: Increase Property Tax Value Exclusion, Hunting and Fishing Licenses, Assist Surviving Spouses.
- ▶ Federal: Properly Fund VA, Modernize VA, Add Toxic Exposure Locations, etc...

Shouldn't This Just Be Done?

- ▶ “My elected official supports Veterans.” Who running for office in their right mind would say anything different? How do you know? DAV MN Congressional Scorecard?
- ▶ **HARD TO ACCEPT TRUTH:** Veterans are a weak lobby. Partisan identities won't change based on Veterans issues. In safe districts on either side, this means Veterans are an easy can to kick down the road.\
- ▶ **ONLY 2** of 18 candidate websites I reviewed for all 8 races for the House of Representatives and 1 race for US Senate had Veterans policy mentioned.
- ▶ Only 1 of those sites had any details.
- ▶ State Senate Candidate to me, “I think Veterans is a Federal issue, not much to do with serving in the State Senate.”
- ▶ Veterans homes, CVSO's, Veterans Cemeteries, MDVA, Veteran Assistance, Homeless Veteran, and Suicide Prevention are just a few examples of the state level.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

- ▶ Sign up for DAV CAN and MinnFluence.
- ▶ Get others to sign up for DAV CAN and MinnFluence.
- ▶ Contact me to brainstorm what we can do in your area (Trent@davmn.org or 651-291-1212)
- ▶ Organize a bus for Veterans Day on the Hill.
- ▶ Share our 2 Priorities with candidates running for MN House of Representatives.
- ▶ Keep informed by signing up for DAV MN E-News, where my Legislative Updates are sent.
- ▶ Know who represents you, how to reach them, teach others the same.

Questions, Comments, Concerns,
Complaints

