



# BPTL Best Practices

## May 25, 2023

Trent Dilks Department of MN  
Al Labelle, Department of WI

---

# Today's Agenda

## Best Practices from Department BPTLs

- Trent Dilks Department of Minnesota
- Al Labelle Department of Wisconsin

Please hold your questions to the end of the presentation and we will have a Q&A period.



Trent Dilks  
Department of Minnesota

# BEST PRACTICES- LESSONS FROM DEPT. OF MN

- Going to go from state legislative session just ended, through to start of session.
  - Focus on State level is intentional in grassroots network building.
    - State level can have major impacts, quicker buy-in, and usually easier to influence.
    - Builds momentum!
    - Impacts like property tax value exclusion, relief from fees for vehicle registration, tabs, etc., hunting and fishing, state parks, burial fees at state cemeteries, Veterans Homes, etc...

# SESSION ENDED

- The first step becoming a/the reliable source for information on what happened and what didn't happen at the end of session.
- MN Example: One organization lost out on a piece of legislation that had nothing to do with DAV's mission and we weren't involved in. They are branding this "the worst session ever." While the facts point to historic levels of funding, relief, and other programs for Veterans as a major win.
- DAV MN will provide the information in a fair and impartial way. The wins and the losses.



# THE TOOLS TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE NETWORK

- The Dept. of CA let me know about a tool from VoterVoice that creates a state level version of the Commanders Action Network (CAN)
- MinnFluence was born. In Minnesota we chose to take the project on solo, while others may join with other VSO's to split the cost.
- The obvious benefit to solo, we have complete control over the content and use. There is no argument when something like charitable gambling comes up, we aren't involved, it isn't part of our mission, so we don't use MinnFluence for that subject.



- Get Timely Minnesota Veteran Legislative Updates
  - Quickly Engage Your Legislators
- Take Action for Minnesota Veterans, Their Families, and Survivors
  - No Need to be a Veteran to Sign Up

•  
How to Join:

Scan The QR Code Below With Your Phones Camera

**Or Go To:** <https://davn.org/about-us/minnfluence/>

Fill in the Information Under “Sign Up for Alerts”

You Will Have Added Your Voice to Support Minnesota’s Veterans



- Get Timely Minnesota Veteran Legislative Updates
  - Quickly Engage Your Legislators
- Take Action for Minnesota Veterans, Their Families, and Survivors
  - No Need to be a Veteran to Sign Up

•  
How to Join:

Scan The QR Code Below With Your Phones Camera

**Or Go To:** <https://davn.org/about-us/minnfluence/>

Fill in the Information Under “Sign Up for Alerts”

You Will Have Added Your Voice to Support Minnesota’s Veterans



# YOU CAN'T BUILD GRASSROOTS WITHOUT BEING ON THE GROUND!

- By definition grassroots have to start at the ground level. Top down grassroots is not a thing.
- Visits!
  - Strategically visiting areas with key lawmakers is the first priority. Looking at what Chapters are located in key areas and getting on their schedule.
  - Signing them up for MinnFluence and CAN.
  - Not just DAV Chapters. I have been invited by AL, VFW, MCL, and others to talk to local posts. Sign em up!





## GRASSROOTS BUILDING CONT...

- Veterans Townhalls during election season
  - During the election season partnering with local chapters to invite in the candidates for office to have a discussion on Veteran specific topics.
  - Local Chapter hosts, finds venue, spreads the word, and provides the free meal (free food puts butts in seats)
  - Dept. BPTL invites candidates, provides some of the questions in advance, and conducts day of meeting.

## GRASSROOTS CONT...

- Presentations at both Fall Conference and Dept. Convention
  - Sign em up! Keep it motivating, don't bore them to death with details. Know your audience. Being a policy wonk is great, but emotional is probably more effective in recruitment.

# SESSION BEGINS

- Work with lawmakers to draft legislation, not just endorse.
- Spread the word, be the primary source of what's happening.
- Testify, testify, testify!
- When something stalls, use your network to push it along.
- Celebrate the wins, and hold accountable the losses.

## MID-SESSION RALLY

- DAV MN leads a group of VSO's to hold a Veterans Day on the Hill Rally
  - We fund busses from around the state to bring Veterans to the Capitol.
  - Put on free lunch, with educational/motivational speakers.
  - March to the Capitol
  - Invite key lawmakers, Governor, etc.. And have them speak of official rally.
  - Used to extract promises before end of session.
  - Hundreds show up. Effective tool to push stalled legislation.
  - While they are there. Sign em UP!



AI Labelle  
Department of Wisconsin



# BEST PRACTICES - WISCONSIN

## Building a Grassroots network

- Be ready to Travel
  - Chapter, District, and Department meetings
  - Public Forums
  - Social Media

# BEST PRACTICES - WISCONSIN

## BPTL Presentations

- Who determines what laws are passed?
  - You
- Advocacy is not a Spectator Sport!
- Get in the Arena
- We are a Team
- We are only as successful as you make us



# BEST PRACTICES - WISCONSIN

## Meetings with Legislators

- Catch them doing something good
- Lead off with a positive
- Thank them for sponsoring DAV-Supported bills
- Then make the presentation
- Develop amnesia





# BEST PRACTICES - WISCONSIN

## Become a Resource

- Forward DAV Testimony
- Keep in touch with Staff
  - Both State and Federal
  - Always testify on State Level
- Hold or attend Town Halls
  - Fall Conference – Senatorial Forum



# BEST PRACTICES - WISCONSIN

## Pay attention to their action

- Don't listen to what they say
- Watch what they do
- Go to DAV-Supported Legislation on National Website – <https://dav.quorum.us/home/>



# BEST PRACTICES - WISCONSIN

## Keep Score!

- Present top legislators an award
- For Congressional Session
- Also State Legislators



# BEST PRACTICES - WISCONSIN

**NOW LET'S HEAR FROM YOU**



Questions, Comments  
Discussion

