



(December 22, 2015)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee

National VA Council, President

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In This Briefing: [Holiday Message 2015](#)

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This holiday season, the Department of Veterans Affairs salutes the valor of our Nation's men and women—past and present—who sacrificed so much to preserve our liberty. And we are grateful for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines deployed around the world, advancing the cause of peace and protecting the freedoms we treasure.

Two of those important freedoms are the rights to gather together with family and friends and worship as we see fit during the holidays. Whether we celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, or any other religious or secular events during this special time of year, our freedom to do so has been safeguarded by those who have worn our country's uniforms.

This season of peace is also a time of remembrance. On Christmas Eve 1944, Private Burnett Miller was stationed in France. Private Miller wrote to his mother, "It's the evening before Christmas, but it's quite hard to realize this. I'll just sort of skip this year and we'll all celebrate twice as much next year." Less than a week later, he saw combat for the first time southwest of Bastogne.

Private Miller's simple words and sentiments resonate with the joy we find among family and friends during this special time of year. And they remind us of the experiences of innumerable Veterans who have spent holidays far away, doing their duty, focused on the mission, and celebrating in quiet, humble ways with their comrades.

As we count our many blessings, let us remember Veterans like Private Miller and their families. And we also offer our thoughts and prayers to our wounded warriors, their families, and the families of the fallen who never made it home for holiday celebrations. We honor them all.

On behalf of our 22 million Veterans and our 350,000 VA employees who are privileged to serve them, I offer my warmest wishes for a joyous holiday season and peace in the New Year. May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Robert A. McDonald

PLEASE PRODUCE LOCALLY FOR ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT ROUTINELY ACCESS EMAIL DUE TO THEIR SPECIALTIES.

