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Biographical INFO

JOY J. ILEM

National Legislative Director
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)



Joy J. Ilem, a service-connected disabled veteran of the U.S. Army, was appointed national legislative director for the more than 1 million-member DAV in August 2015.

Ilem is a member of the DAV's legislative team employed at DAV National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C. She directs the advancement of DAV's public policy objectives to promote and defend reasonable and responsible legislation to assist disabled veterans and their families nationwide, while guarding current veteran's benefits and services from legislative erosion.

Ilem began her DAV career as a member of Class III at National Service Officer Training Academy in Denver. She graduated in 1996 and was assigned as a national service officer apprentice at the DAV National Service Office in Phoenix, Arizona. In 1997, she was assigned as a national appeals officer with the DAV staff at the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C. In 1999, she was transferred to the National Service and Legislative Headquarters to serve as an associate national legislative director. Ilem was appointed assistant legislative director in 2000 and deputy national legislative director in June 2009, holding that title until her current appointment.

A native of Shakopee, Minnesota, Ilem was raised in the greater Minneapolis area, and is a 1977 graduate of Totino Grace High School in Fridley, Minnesota. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona at Tucson in 1994, majoring in archaeology, with a minor in religious studies.

Ilem enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1982. Following basic training at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, and advanced medical training at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, she was assigned as a medic to the 67th Evacuation Hospital in Wurzburg, Germany, where she underwent additional certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT). Ilem's military duties included emergency room assignments and non-commissioned officer in charge of recovery room operations. She was honorably discharged from the Army in 1985.

A life member of DAV Chapter 10 Arlington-Fairfax, Virginia, Ilem resides in Alexandria, Virginia.