

*A History of
Associates of Vietnam Veterans
Of America, Inc.*



Together Always

Revised: 2018

ASSOCIATES OF VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

AVVA NATIONAL OFFICERS

President
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer

NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Region I
Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut

Region II
New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware

Region III
West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland,
District of Columbia

Region IV
Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Region V
Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois

Region VI
Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wisconsin

Region VII
Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma

Region VIII
Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alaska

Region IX
Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah, Guam, Philippines

STATE OFFICERS

States are represented by either a state representative (unincorporated)
Or
A state president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer (incorporated)

CHAPTER OFFICERS

Chapters are represented by either a chapter representative (unincorporated)
Or
A chapter president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer (incorporated)

AVVA – Who are We?

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. is dedicated to advancing the work of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. whose motto is: “*Never again will one Generation of Veterans Abandon Another*”. We are devoted to continuing that concept with and for them, and we are deeply committed to legislative efforts ensuring the rights of, and benefits for, all veterans and their families. AVVA is dedicated to the aggressive advancement of realistic goals, while maintaining integrity and a spirit of unity that reflect its commitment to Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., and to all veterans [of all eras], their families and our communities. We accomplish this through cooperative projects and programs which facilitate, enhance and improve, communication with our members and the public.

AVVA is *not* an auxiliary. Any person who holds true the purposes of AVVA, regardless of their age, race sex or creed, may apply for membership in this organization. We encourage veterans of other than Vietnam eras to join, as our goals are in their best interest. Persons who qualify for membership in Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. are accepted as dual members.

AVVA is a non-profit organization, and is exempt from federal taxes. We began as a 501(C)4 incorporation and have determined that we can best serve our veteran community by converting to a 501(C)3, which allows us to solicit funding and accept tax-deductible donations. This will sustain our educational and other programs; the IRS status conversion was initiated in 2018 and *should* be completed well before the end of 2019.

AVVA has structured itself so that we can (a) work with and support the values, goals, and works of Vietnam Veterans of America, **and** (b) continue independently in a future in which VVA does not exist. VVA was purposely set up to have an end date, as they are only allowed members who served during the Vietnam War. AVVA, having the ability to include anyone, looks to a future in which we can carry on with our programs and advocacy, and serve our veterans for as long as we are needed.

How did AVVA Come into Being?

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. began as a group of people dedicated to advancing the work of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. (VVA). For many years prior to 1999, people who were friends or family members of Vietnam Veteran of America were members of VVA as non-voting associate members. We assisted them with all manner of events and tasks. Our first AVVA National Liaison was Linda Wilson of Florida, in 1986. In those days, VVA appointed the AVVA Liaison to their board.

By 1998, VVA was notified by the IRS that they had exceeded the limit of non-veteran members, and had to accept that their concern for their congressional charter left them at a turning point. The associates had grown in number, and by necessity, had to branch off into a separate, but ‘sister’ organization. (A sister organization is defined as: a separate organization who is dependent on the parent organization to exist).

In January 1999 AVVA formally incorporated as a separate organization from VVA, but we have never separated ourselves in spirit or in our activities. The first official bylaws for Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America were adopted, and the first national officers were sworn in, at a two-day meeting in Orlando, FL. Over the years, we have evolved from a ‘sister’ organization to an independent membership and support organization, working side-by-side with VVA and on our own agendas.

The first official convention for AVVA was held in Buffalo, NY in August of 2000. At this convention, the first official officers and regional directors were elected, and the bylaws were amended and adopted by the state representatives. The founding board of directors included: Nancy Switzer, President; Mary Miller, Vice-President; Fran Davis, Secretary; Bill Williams, Treasurer; Kathi Tauer, Region 1 Director; Margaret Wojciecjowicz, Region 2 Director; Elaine Simmons, Region 3 Director; Mary Yeomans, Region 4 Director; Marcia Hicks, Region 5 Director; Jeani Wells, Region 6 Director; Patsy Varnell, Region 7 Director; Yvonne Hill, Region 8 Director; Sonja Holybee, Region 9 Director. The first VVA Special Advisor was Rocky Gothard.

From 2000 to 2010, AVVA held its elections and conventions in even numbered years. Our conventions coincided with the VVA Leadership Conferences. Whatever the reasons for that, in 2010 AVVA's membership (through a vote at convention) decided to change our convention years to odd numbered years, so that we would hold them in conjunction with VVA conventions. Both our convention, and leadership conference, would now coincide with VVA.

In 2002 states began to incorporate as subsidiaries of the national organization, within their individual states. The first state to incorporate was Illinois.

In 2004, the national bylaws were amended to allow chapters to become incorporated within their own states. Later, in approximately 2011 or 2012, the organization made the distinction between unincorporated and incorporated chapters and states, so that it would be clear to everyone that both have voting rights within the national organization.

Because of the change in convention years from even to odd, the 2010 board of directors, and all state and chapter representatives and presidents, served a three-year term, setting our first odd year convention in 2013. Since that time, all conventions are held in odd numbered years, and all terms of office for all levels were set as two year terms. The 2019 convention in Spokane, WA marked AVVA's 10th National Convention and its 20th anniversary.

The AVVA Logo

The AVVA logo has been in use since we incorporated. Our logo is an off-shoot from the VVA logo, which was designed based on the Vietnam Service Ribbon. This was done to show our direct affiliation with, and respect for, VVA. We added the rocker at the bottom stating "Together Always" as our promise to always work alongside VVA. The name, *Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.* (VVA) is a copyrighted name, and the VVA logo is also a copyright. Therefore, our name and logo are used with the express permission of VVA.

Due to the special license agreement that exists between the two organizations, permitting AVVA to use the derivatives of the VVA copyrighted logo and name, anyone who wishes to use the name or logo must first get permission to do so from National AVVA.

The AVVA flag uses the opposite base color of the Vietnam Veterans of America flag to distinguish the two. Both flags are based on the colors of the Vietnam Service Medal.

Organizational Structure

Historically, (prior to 1999), AVVA positions were known as "Liaisons" to VVA, and were appointed by the VVA chapter, state, or national presidents and regional directors. When AVVA incorporated as a national organization, legally independent of VVA, the bylaws were crafted to require elections within the AVVA membership.

In 2000, at the first AVVA National Convention, the state representatives (who were derived from the existing state “liaisons”) elected the first official national officers and regional directors.

In 2001, the first official elections were held for the positions of state representatives.

In April 2001, the Associates affiliated with VVA chapters elected their first “affiliated” chapter representatives. For this first election, there were no guidelines outside of holding regular membership in the Corporation. The most important issue at that time was for the AVVA members affiliated with each VVA chapter to have elected representation. Until 2013 only state representatives or presidents voted at national conventions. During the 2010 convention policy was changed to include chapter presidents and representatives, and at-large representatives, as voting delegates.

Currently, AVVA holds its local elections for chapters and states in even numbered years, and its conventions in odd numbered years. The convention in 2019 will be our official 20th anniversary, and our 10th convention. As of this writing (summer 2018), AVVA has over 9,800 members.

The purpose of this organization is to help veterans and their families, and to further the VVA motto: “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another”. AVVA supports and encourages military and veteran related legislation, and runs programs that are intended to support veterans, their families, and our local communities. Our future may bring changes, but we know that change is inevitable, in one form or another, and we are prepared to meet the challenges that the future will bring. Our wish is to continue to ensure that our military and our veterans are never pushed aside again.