



P.O. BOX 953663  
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# Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida

Newsletter

July - September 2023

## 22nd Anniversary of the September 11, 2001 Attacks

PRESS STATEMENT  
ANTONY J. BLINKEN, SECRETARY OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesperson  
SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

On September 11, 2001, terrorists killed nearly 3,000 people and injured more than 6,000 others in the worst attack against the homeland in our nation's history. Today we honor their memories and stand with the families and friends of those who perished in New York City, Arlington, Virginia, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The men and women of the U.S. Department of State will never forget that tragic day, the many lives lost, and the first responders who rushed into danger to save them. We also remember our colleagues who were killed on this day in 2012 in Benghazi, Libya. Their bravery and sacrifice continue to be an inspiration for this Department and our nation.

The memory of those who perished on 9/11 reminds us of why we must continue to fight against those who commit acts of terrorism. In the years since, we have stood side by side with partners from around the world to end the scourge of terrorism and ensure terrorists are held accountable for their crimes. The United States will continue to defend our homeland, our people, and our allies.

## Former Student Honored

On September 11, 2023, the Volusia County Democratic Veterans Caucus sponsored a program in memory of a student, Specialist Dennis James, Jr., who attended Pine Ridge High School in Deltona. Volusia County Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida (VCDVCF) member John Navarra teaches government at the high school and organized the program. The program began with the Presentation of the Colors by the Pine Ridge High School ROTC Color Guard. The Pine Ridge High School Chorus sang the National Anthem. VCDVCF member Danny Fuqua, a retired US Army Combat Veteran, lead the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. In 2011, teacher John Navarra came across an article about a former Pine Ridge High School student who was killed in action while fighting in Afghanistan. The young man who didn't make it home alive was U.S. Army Specialist Dennis James Jr. He died at 21, just three years after graduating from high school in Deltona. Mr. Navarra organized a private ceremony to honor Dennis James Jr.'s life and service to the country. Mr. Navarra spoke about 9/11 at the school and how Mr. James had participated in school athletics, including the Varsity Football and Basketball teams. He also recognized the VCDVCF veterans in attendance for their service to our country.

VCDVCF President Phil Giorno and members of the Volusia County Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida presented the memorial plaque to the family members in attendance, including Mr. James' grandparents, Phyllis and Glen Goodwin, his aunt and adopted mother, Rhonda Williams, and several of his cousins, Tiara Stanley, Keanna Deal, Curtis McMorris and spouse Toni Marie Ticien.

Closing comments were made by Principal Ryser, reminiscing on his days in the Army and his memories of the Fourth Infantry Team, Third Battalion, of the 10th Mountain Division in which Spec. James served. In addition to his own service, Principal Ryser has two adult children currently serving in the armed forces, a daughter in the Navy and a son in the Army. We cannot say thank you enough to the military and their families for the sacrifices they make for our country. Also in attendance were school administrators, students, and teachers.

by Sally Garcia

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## DeSantis' support of Tuberville's political stunts an affront to Florida's military members

Special to the Beacon -August 29, 2023 The West Volusia Beacon

BY PHILLIP GIORNO

My family and I have a long history of service to this country. I was born into a military family at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, and I spent my childhood growing up on military bases in Okinawa, Japan, Germany and England. But military service doesn't just run deep in my family's heritage — I know firsthand the sacrifice it requires. During the Vietnam War, I volunteered to serve in the U.S. Navy 1967-72. I was proud to serve then, and I'm still proud to serve now — in a different capacity.

As the president of the Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida's Volusia County chapter, I advocate for my fellow veterans every day. I represent our interests and work hard to make sure that military veterans are reflected in electoral politics in Florida and around the nation. It's a position I hold with pride. No matter what position I hold, I'll always be honored to stand shoulder to shoulder with the countless other men and women who have answered the call to defend our great country, because I know what they've given up to serve. While many of us understand the values of military service, it's clear that not everyone does. In fact, some elected officials are openly disrespecting military members by using them as pawns in their political games.

Since February, Alabama Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville has been blocking every military nomination and promotion over his personal disagreement with a Pentagon policy that grants leave and offsets travel expenses for military personnel who cannot get an abortion in the state where they are stationed. It's a shameful political stunt, and it's an affront to the folks who put their lives on the line to defend our country. What's worse is that Florida's own Gov. Ron DeSantis has come out in support of Sen. Tuberville, showing us he's more concerned with his own agenda than honoring the brave service members who fight to protect our freedoms and our way of life. This holdup isn't just misguided — it has serious implications for our national security, global leadership and troop morale. By tying up these critical nominations and promotions, Sen. Tuberville is hindering the readiness of our armed forces.

Over the past several months, the Senate has held up more than 300 military promotions and nominations, turning what should be a standard procedural vote into a deadlock. What should have taken minutes has become a process that could take months to complete. And there is no end in sight with Congress adjourned for its August recess. As a veteran, I know that keeping our armed forces ready is absolutely critical to the security of our country. By stonewalling these promotions, Sen. Tuberville is actively choosing to kneecap our military and putting his own political games over the safety of American interests at home and abroad. Beyond the impacts on our military readiness, Sen. Tuberville's partisan games are also causing damage and disruption for military families, as their pay and assignments are frozen. Military families, who have already sacrificed so much, are unable to get new housing or enroll their kids at new schools this fall. Military spouses don't know where or when they can apply for new jobs. It's unacceptable.

Despite his claims that "there's no one more military" than him, Sen. Tuberville has never served in the armed forces. But as a veteran himself, I would expect Gov. Ron DeSantis to know better. That's why DeSantis' support for Sen. Tuberville's antics is all the more disappointing — though it's hardly surprising. Long before he launched his 2024 presidential campaign, DeSantis made it clear that he will always put his political career ambitions above the people of Florida. Since kicking off his 2024 run, he's made his extreme position on abortion and other cultural issues, dictatorial demagoguery, and his love for cheap political stunts cornerstones of his campaign. He's shown us time and time again that he'll do anything to score political currency, and now, he's shown us that he's willing to let Florida's armed service members pay the price.

While MAGA Republicans play games with our national security, President Biden is focused on being the commander in chief our country needs. As president, he's advocated tirelessly for military families, including by passing the PACT Act to strengthen health care and benefits for America's veterans and their survivors.

DeSantis, on the other hand, won't be the commander in chief our country deserves. Instead, he'll use our armed forces as a testing ground for his extreme agenda, and he'll spend his time stoking culture wars instead of keeping our service members at the ready. DeSantis has made a grave miscalculation. Our military men and women know that the real threat to our safety isn't "wokeness" or Pentagon policies, the real threat is a politician who puts his own ambitions above national security. And if he doesn't tank his own campaign before then, come 2024, veterans will make sure DeSantis has no path to the White House and re-elect President Biden and Vice President Harris to finish the job.

— *Giorno, of Deltona, is past chair of the Volusia County Council, a member of the American Legion, and a life member of the Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.*

## Memorial Day theme: Unity in Marion County

By Mary Savage, DVCF member

Marion County DEC Chair Diana Williams represented Democratic values this past Memorial Day when she and two of her grandchildren attended the annual Memorial Day ceremony at the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park. The event included inspirational speeches and featured Morrey Dean, who was Ocala's police chief and community advocate. The theme of the speech was unity. "What an appropriate message!" Williams said. The Kingdom of the Sun Band performed inspiring patriotic music and there was a flyover by jets. The park also has a bench sponsored by the Marion County Democratic Party.



*Mr. Navarra presents veterans*



*Specialist James' Plaque*



*At the TAI Convention, on the left Tuskegee Airmen, Lt Col Enoch Woodhouse and on the right Retired General Llyod Newton*

## Sparks attends Tuskegee Airmen Inc. National Convention

DVCF member, Reuben Sparks attended the Tuskegee Airmen Inc., National Convention in Albuquerque, NM from 16-19, August, 2023. The convention highlighted the legacy of the World War II generation. The first presentation was by Clifton Truman Daniels who is the grandson of President Harry Truman. He spoke about President Truman signing Executive Order 9981 that ended segregated organizations within the military such as the Buffalo Soldiers and the Tuskegee Airmen. Original Tuskegee Airman, Lt Col, Enoch Woodhouse gave the keynote address. He was a Paymaster for the Tuskegee Airmen, making sure all received their pay. Colonel Woodhouse said he was the only African-American in his class of about 1300 students at Yale University in the 1940's. Colonel Woodhouse would later finish Boston University Law School. The Tuskegee Airmen Inc. chapter in Albuquerque is named for retired General Lloyd "Fig" Newton. He was the first African-American Thunderbird Pilot and he later was the Commander of Air Education and Training Command (AETC). Boeing presented the chapter with \$25,000 for their youth programs. Retired General Newton and Retired General Rice were in attendance. The goals of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. organization are to celebrate the accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen, encourage young people to seek careers in aviation and STEM and to raise and donate money for scholarships for youth to attend college and begin their careers.



# VETERANS STAND DOWN HONORING OUR HERO'S

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