

**Statement of  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA  
2023 Legislative Priorities  
Before the Joint House and Senate  
Veterans Affairs Committees  
March 8, 2023**



*Presented by*  
**Colonel Nelson L. Mellitz USAF, Ret.  
National Commander**

Chairmen Tester and Bost, Ranking Members Moran and Takano, Members of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, fellow veterans, and friends, I am Colonel Nelson L. Mellitz, USAF, Retired the 91<sup>st</sup> National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. (JWV). I have served 32-years in the United States Air Force, supporting operations from the Vietnam War through Iraq.

JWV was founded in 1896 and was Congressionally chartered August 21, 1984. JWV advocates for all veterans regardless of their religion or period of service.

JWV is the longest serving Veterans Service Organization (VSO) in the country and will celebrate its 127th anniversary next week on March 15, 2023. JWV supports the military and veterans by participating in Veterans Day and Memorial Day events and by volunteering at Department of Defense military bases and Department of Veterans Affairs locations (medical facilities, regional offices, and cemeteries) across the country. JWV's mission message is strong and clear: fighting for military and veterans benefits and services; advocating on their behalf with Congressional officials, Executive Branch departments and the White House; and continuing to fight antisemitism wherever and whenever it appears.

### **Special Focus on Antisemitism**

As the only Jewish VSO, JWV opposes all forms of discrimination and bigotry but is especially outspoken on antisemitism. JWV officials participate in roundtables and state JWV's strong position in fighting antisemitism and cited examples of JWV having a Nazi lithograph removed from the walls of a USAF base in Texas and calling for the resignation of a German official for comments about British Major General Orde Wingate. JWV is also proud of its advocacy for William Shemin and Tibor Rubin leading to each receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor.

As instances of antisemitism continue to rise across the country, JWV asks all Americans to be vigilant, learn, and educate our fellow citizens. JWV is doing its part by partnering with organizations like Combating Antisemitism Movement and StandWithUs to address antisemitism at colleges and universities.

*JWV asks HVAC and SVAC members to join with us in combating antisemitism targeted at veterans and military servicemembers. JWV stands ready to be a resource for you and your staffs in helping to educate Americans. We feel that education is the key to reducing antisemitic actions and incidents in America and around the world.*

### **No Government Funding**

For the record, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA, does not receive any grants or contracts from the federal government.

## **JWV Priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress**

### **Supporting America's Veterans, Servicemembers, Their Families, Caregivers, and Survivors**

JWV works to support veterans and servicemembers, and believes that obligation extends to their families, including caregivers and survivors. JWV is and continues to be at the forefront as a voice for not only those of the Jewish faith but for **all** veterans. In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, many bipartisan bills were signed into law that address some of the most important issues facing veterans today, including the landmark PACT Act to address toxic exposures. JWV worked with Congress to connect veterans and their families to much-needed resources for education, housing, and health care. As we look to the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, JWV honors all those who are wearing or have worn the uniform of the United States, *JWV continues to support them by advocating for the following list of priorities.*

### **Delivering Timely, High-quality Benefits and Services**

JWV is pleased the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is delivering more benefits and health care, more quickly, to more veterans than ever before. In 2022, VA processed a record 1.7 million veteran claims. *JWV will continue to hold VA accountable and urge them to continue to be innovative and serve and be timely to more veterans.*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) halted Compensation and Pension (C&P) exams across the country. Thus, the implementation of P.L.115-55, The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, has become ever more critical.

JWV will continue engaging with VA in the implementation of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (P.L.115-55) to improve the claims and appeals process. JWV urges Congress to: 1) have VA support investment in software and hardware upgrades for claims management; 2) have VA continue to hire and train officials to meet the expected surge in claims due to the PACT Act; 3) have VA assure that the processing of non-PACT Act claims are not delayed; and 4) assure that VA must preclude 'unlicensed' individuals from taking fees for representing veterans' claims.

### **Addressing Toxic Exposures and Burn Pits**

*JWV, like many VSOs, made toxic exposure and burn pits a top priority. We thank all of you on HVAC and SVAC for passing this landmark legislation. It is life-changing for so many veterans. The PACT Act, signed on August 10, 2022, marks the biggest expansion of VA health care in nearly 30 years. The PACT Act extends health care and disability benefits to approximately 3.5 million veterans from all eras from Vietnam to present day. The PACT Act also adds 23 presumptive conditions including hypertension. Assigning an effective date of August 10, 2022, for claims filed before August 10, 2023, is a positive step.*

JWV commends VA for beginning in November 2022, the screening of all veterans enrolled in VA health care for toxic exposures and for prioritizing claims filed by terminally ill veterans in December 2022. JWV urges Congress to: 1) monitor VA's implementation of the Honoring Our PACT Act to include expanded healthcare eligibility and recently established presumptive conditions; 2) support VA staffing needs to effectively implement the Honoring Our PACT Act; and 3) support the addition of illnesses as new presumptive conditions when the scientific burden has been met.

### **Suicide Prevention and Mental Health -- Reducing Veteran Suicide**

In July 2022, the 988 Veterans Crisis Line went live to provide veterans and their loved ones an easy to remember number for veterans in crisis. *JWV was a vocal and strong advocate of the change to 988.* More must be done as even one suicide is one too many.

The suicide rate among veterans is much higher when compared to civilians, and even higher for female veterans. For younger veterans, the rates are even more disproportionate, and climbing even higher. For example, while the overall veteran suicide rate rose 30% from 2005 to 2017, the 18-34-year-old veteran suicide rate rose by 2.5 times. While 18-34-year-old veterans make up only 10% of the veteran population, they represent 94% of the increase in veteran deaths. In addition, the suicide rate for active duty servicemembers is at an all-time high, with the U.S. Army experiencing its highest rate since before World War II.

Actions are needed to expand research into core causes, risk factors, and protective factors for service members, veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors. JWV urges Congress to: 1) expand government and non-government funding around servicemembers, veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors suicide rates, their possible causes, and the most significant risk and protective factors for each of these populations; 2) ensure VA and DoD release the underlying raw data from their annual suicide reports (properly redacted to protect individual identities); 3) ensure DoD resumes reporting veteran combat deployment data to VA and for VA to resume reporting on combat deployment data for suicides; and 4) explore the expansion of alternative therapies including complimentary treatment modalities such as highly trained service dogs, equine therapy, outdoor and sports-related programs, and other innovative treatments.

### **Expanding Services for Veterans and Caregivers**

More than 5.5 million caregivers provide support to our nation's wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers and veterans, many of whom require close care and supervision. Ensuring caregivers receive the support, training, and compensation they deserve is a critical priority for JWV. *JWV will continue to work with Congress and VA to ensure these veterans and their caregivers are fairly evaluated to enter the program and that those in the program receive the proper clinical review.*

VA implemented its final expansion of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) to eligible veterans of all eras on October 1, 2022. JWV commends VA for collaborating with various stakeholder groups to make essential

improvements to the program to streamline the program and make it easier for caregivers and veterans to navigate. *We do urge VA and Congress to resolve eligibility and system issues as early as possible in this Congress. The revised regulations on eligibility make it far too difficult for caregivers to enter and remain in the program.*

Action is needed to expand access to caregiving, palliative, geriatric, and extended care programs and services for veterans and wounded warriors and their caregivers. JWV urges Congress to: 1) assure VA and Congress are actively providing oversight and guidance to address existing PCAFC eligibility and program issues; 2) continue to assist VA and Congress to identify and implement program improvements either through policy, regulatory, or legislative means; and 3) establish organization-wide guidance on caregiver assessments and reassessments. Most importantly, JWV looks forward to working with Congress to remove the regulatory requirement for a 70% disability rating to be eligible for this program.

### **Major Richard Star Act**

JWV is pleased that Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester reintroduced the *Major Richard Star Act* (S. 344) on February 9, 2023. Senator Mike Crapo continues as the lead cosponsor. The Act already has 49 co-sponsors. The legislation which would end an unfair pay offset faced by more than 50,000 combat-injured veterans, would allow medically retired, combat-injured veterans with less than 20 years of service to receive full DoD retirement pay and VA disability pay, instead of losing hundreds of dollars a month to cover the current unfair offset.

Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL) and Representative Raul Ruiz (CA) plan to reintroduce H.R. 1282 shortly. Our work is not done. JWV urges all Senators and Representatives to cosponsor and ensure the Act is either included in the FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) or pass it as a standalone bill. Last year, more than two-thirds of Congress supported the Star Act, with 67 Senate co-sponsors and another 336 in the House.

### **Supporting Women and Underserved Veterans**

According to VA, women are the fastest growing group of veterans who use VA services. JWV is committed to addressing the specialized health care needs of women veterans including increasing cancer screenings, improving mental health care and access, addressing infertility, and reducing intimate partner violence. *JWV supports the provisions of the Deborah Sampson Act and remains committed to improving maternal health, and placing a Women's Mental Health Champion Coordinator at every VA Medical Center to ensure women feel welcome and receive equitable treatment and care.*

Women and other underserved veterans transitioning out of uniform face unique challenges because of their experiences in service or other barriers. VA expects women health care enrollees to grow from the current 10% to as high as 19% by 2025. Additionally, according to GAO, VA has taken steps to reduce disparities in health care outcomes linked to race and ethnicity but lacks the mechanisms to measure progress and ensure accountability.

Despite recognizing weaknesses related to the quality of race and ethnicity data, VA has not implemented corrective actions to address them. COVID-19 has placed a spotlight on the barriers and disparities facing underserved veterans when seeking access to health care and services through VA. JWV urges VA to expand its collaborative efforts with its federal partners and expedite efforts to remove these and other barriers to ensure all veterans receive the same care, services, and benefits they earned through service.

JWV urges Congress to: 1) eliminate health disparities for underserved veterans to ensure health equity in accessing timely, sensitive, and quality benefits through VA; 2) use lessons learned during the COVID-19 national pandemic to accelerate VA's efforts to eliminate disparities and achieve health equity to meet the unique needs of high-risk veteran groups; 3) secure additional funding for research, treatment, data management, medical care, and staffing to provide gender-specific and culturally competent care; 4) redesign VHA delivery system and facilities to remove barriers to ensure privacy and a safe and inclusive environment for including veterans with special needs, such as those living in rural areas, homebound, aging, amputee, cognitively and physically impaired, and veterans with cultural and language differences; and 5) expand VA sexual assault/harassment prevention efforts to eliminate problems enterprise wide.

### **Protecting Servicemember and Veteran Education Benefits**

For too long, servicemembers and veterans have been targeted by predatory marketing practices from for-profit educational institutions. In October, the Department of Education closed the 90/10 loophole in the Higher Education Act that allowed for-profit colleges to aggressively recruit veterans and service members. *JWV has long advocated for this important change and will continue to hold the Department of Education accountable in implementing the law.*

Student veterans tend to be older, are more likely to have children, and have a disability. Since its inception, the GI Bill has been a vital tool for recruitment and retention by the uniformed services and essential for helping make the transition to civilian life. Research shows education benefits continue to be one of the top reasons for joining the military. JWV urges Congress to: 1) urge proportional upgrades to the Title 10 Montgomery GI Bill program to keep pace with the cost of education, and to transfer 10 USC 1606 into Title 38 as sub-chapter of Forever GI Bill to finalize sunseting the Montgomery GI Bill; 2) ensure sufficient funding and oversight to modernize VA's GI Bill information technology system; and 3) increase VA flexibility for out-of-cycle housing allowance adjustments.

### **Ending Veteran Homelessness**

Thanks to efforts by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), and VA, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness declined by 11% between 2020 and 2022 – the largest decline in the last five years. As a member of the National Coalition on Homeless Veterans, JWV continues to support efforts to permanently reduce homelessness by housing veterans.

We commend VA for housing more than 40,000 veterans and exceeding their goal of 38,000 in the last year. These veterans were provided safe and stable environments they deserve.

### **Fixing VA's Electronic Health Record System**

JWV remains concerned that VA continues to experience issues with deploying its electronic health record system. The combination of cost overruns and lack of proper training for clinicians and staff jeopardizes patients' safety in the Pacific Northwest. VA must improve training for its staff and hold Oracle/Cerner accountable for the system's failures.

HVAC and SVAC held several hearings and enacted legislation requiring VA to provide regular reports to Congress on the records system. JWV insists VA learn from and take corrective actions to prevent similar issues in future deployments. JWV urges Congress to hold VA accountable and even withhold funding before any future deployments are considered.

### **Arlington National Cemetery, Pending Eligibility Changes**

JWV continues to advocate for a long-term legislative solution to preserve burial with full military honors for countless elderly and women veterans who could lose that earned benefit. The Expanding America's National Cemetery Act of 2023 has yet to be introduced in either chamber. JWV thanks Senator Richard Blumenthal, a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee for being the lead sponsor. Representative Lisa McClain (MI) is the lead on the House side. The draft bill does not specifically address the planned reduction of eligibility at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), but it takes significant steps toward a long-term solution. The draft bill would:

- 1) authorize the transformation of a VA-run national cemetery "to continue provision of full military honors" prior to Arlington reaching capacity. This would remove the space restrictions at Arlington which led to the ill-conceived eligibility changes now working their way through the federal rulemaking process.
- 2) ensure all eligibility criteria used for full military honors at the proposed cemetery are the same as those in effect for ANC as of March 31, 2022. This would make Congress' intent clear regarding eligibility changes beyond that date, increasing the likelihood of the current process staying in place.
- 3) require a joint DoD/VA report covering both cemetery expansion and any new eligibility criteria, paying special attention to women veterans and to those whose military careers did not include service in combat. This further clarifies Congress' intent to better account for these groups in the eligibility process.

Despite its Southern Expansion, and eligibility restrictions designed to extend the life of the cemetery, ANC eventually will run out of room. Changing the rules is a cost-cutting measure that comes on the backs of military retirees and others whose final plans included burial at a national cemetery. It's also shortsighted, because a long-term solution involving the transformation of an existing VA national cemetery is cost-sensitive and establishes efficiencies by relying on existing VA expertise.

Our friends and colleagues at the Service Woman's Action Network (SWAN) noted the changes are discriminatory. SWAN stated in a February 2022, letter to congressional leadership, "Suddenly, most living veterans eligible for burial at ANC, many of whom served in critical operations at sea or in the air and all but a few women – who were barred by law from service in combat occupations and units until recently – will be denied internment at ANC despite their dedication, gallant, and often dangerous service to their Country."

### **Survivor Benefits "Love Lives on Act"**

JWV joins with other VSOs in the military survivor community, to thank Senators Rafael Warnock and Jerry Moran for their leadership on the "Love Lives on Act." Originally introduced in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, the proposed legislation is the first comprehensive approach to allowing eligible military surviving spouses to retain survivor benefits upon remarriage prior to age 55.

The "Love Lives on Act" will ensure surviving military spouses retain eligibility for survivor benefits from the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), if they remarry before age 55. It also removes archaic and punitive language regarding 'holding oneself out to be married.'

This is an unjust situation that must be rectified. This restriction is imposed on military surviving families but not on the surviving families of first responders. For example, most U.S. surviving spouses of fallen firefighters and law enforcement officers are allowed to remarry before age 55 and maintain survivor pensions and benefits. Our nation's fallen military heroes deserve no less. JWV fully supports the "Love Lives on Act" to honor and strengthen our Nation's Gold Star Families. We look forward to working with Senators Warnock and Moran to pass this important legislation.

### **JWV Thanks Committees for Enacting AUTO for Veterans Act**

JWV wants to thank the leadership of both the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees for including H.R. 3304, the AUTO for Veterans Act in H.R. 7939, the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022. The President signed the bill into law on January 5, 2023.

This important legislation had bipartisan support and permits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to immediately provide an additional automobile allowance to eligible veterans if 25 years have elapsed since they received their first automobile grant. Over time, the period would shorten to 10 years. The bill also changes the definition of medical services to include certain vehicle modifications like van lifts, which are offered through VA's Automobile Adaptive Equipment program.

## **VA Regulations and Administrative Policy Changes**

### **VA Final Rule Cuts Emergency Medical Air Transportation Reimbursement Rates Putting Veterans at Risk**

In a January letter to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, JWV and 22 other VSOs expressed deep concern with the Proposed Rule (RIN 2900-AP89, Change in Rates VA Pays for Special Modes of Transportation) that cuts the VA reimbursement rate for emergency air medical services to below the costs of the services themselves. As published, it would put more than 2.7 million rural veterans in our country who are enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and 4.8 million rural veterans overall, at risk of losing life-saving emergency air transportation.

These emergency air services are ordered by physicians and first responders, when they believe providing health care within the golden hour after a stroke, heart attack, or other life-threatening situation could be the difference between life or death for a veteran. This proposed rule would cut VA's reimbursement rate to less than 50% of operational costs, which will cause emergency air medical bases around the country to shut their doors, halting services to veterans.

In January 2022, the No Surprises Act went into effect, requiring air medical companies to submit two years of cost data to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This data will help inform VA and HHS what should be the appropriate reimbursement rate for emergency air services. When VA published the final rule on February 16, 2023, they made no changes to the proposed rule. VA did delay the effective date to February 16, 2024.

While this delay is a welcome development, JWV and the VSO community are requesting that VA immediately meet with VSOs and the air transportation industry to discuss VA's actions to reduce reimbursement rates and find workable solutions that do not result in loss of access. JWV applauds the leadership of Chairman Tester and committee staff, and we look forward to working together to hold VA accountable and seek alternative workable solutions before the final rule becomes effective on February 16, 2024.

### **National Standards of Care**

JWV as an organization, supports the concept of national standards of care that protect our nation's veterans and ensure that they have access to high-quality care. That said, JWV has strong concerns about VA's initiative to establish national standards of practice for health professionals within the VA health system that could lower the standard of care available to veterans.

## **Policy – Reducing Wait Times by Expanding Access for CRNAs**

JWV has joined Veterans Need Care Now, a grassroots coalition committed to reducing surgical wait times in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities. The coalition is calling on VA to take urgent action to reduce wait times for veterans requiring anesthesia and pain management services by expanding access to the Department's 1,000 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs).

Six years after news reports and court documents first showed veterans were experiencing significant wait times accessing surgeries and other healthcare in the Veterans Health Administration, a national omnibus survey conducted by Veterans Need Care Now has found that more than one in five (23%) of veteran households still report delays in securing VA health appointments and surgical procedures. Of these delays, 13% were viewed as major problems for veterans and their families.

The coalition, comprised of veteran and healthcare provider organizations, is urging VA to expedite its consideration of national practice standards for CRNAs and to grant veterans direct access to CRNAs across the VA health system, which will reduce wait times and expand access to high-quality anesthesia and pain care.

The VA's national standards for health occupations are intended to increase veterans' access to safe and effective health care and improve health outcomes. According to VA, the development process for standards will include opportunities for internal VA employee feedback and external engagement via publication of the proposed national standards of practice in the Federal Register for public comment; specific engagement with State Boards; and pre-decisional collaboration with labor partners.

Nationwide, CRNAs deliver more than 50 million anesthesia and pain management services each year and practice in every setting from hospital emergency rooms to ambulatory surgical centers. Historically, CRNAs have provided much of the anesthesia to our active-duty military in combat arenas since World War I and predominate in veterans' hospitals and the U.S. Armed Services, where they enjoy full practice authority in every branch of the military.

With the enactment of the PACT Act, many of the 5 million veterans now eligible for care will need access to anesthesia services, increasing the urgency for the VA to act to increase access to these services, especially given the currently healthcare workforce shortages. The coalition's national survey found broad and strong public support for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to give veterans direct access to the care and services of CRNAs. An overwhelming 88% majority support this change, extending across party, age, gender, race, and all other key demographics. Among veteran households, 88% are strongly in favor of the proposal. JWV asks the Committees to hold VA accountable and do what is best for veterans by giving them direct access to the care and services of CRNAs.

## **Policy – National Standards of Practice for Eye Care Health Care Professionals**

One reason JWV is so concerned about the future of veterans' surgical eye care is that in September 2022, VA modified its Community Care "Standardized Episode of Care (SEOC): Eye Care Comprehensive" guideline by removing language that has provided that "only ophthalmologists can perform invasive procedures, including injections, lasers, and eye surgery." By removing this sentence, VA is implicitly authorizing optometrists to perform ophthalmic surgery on veterans they refer under the Community Care program in the few states were permitted by state licensure laws.

JWV understands that VA removed this language without any opportunity for public or veteran community to comment. We are extremely concerned that this important patient safeguard was removed and poses an increased risk to veterans requiring surgical eye care. Veterans have benefitted from established, consistent, high-quality surgical eye care for decades because VA maintained a long-standing policy that restricts the performance of therapeutic laser eye surgery to ophthalmologists, medical or osteopathic doctors who specialize in eye and vision care, in VA medical facilities.

This policy is consistent with the standard of medical care in most states. It also ensures that there is a system-wide quality standard for surgical eye care and that all veterans have access to the eye care provider with the appropriate education, training and professional experience needed to perform their eye surgery.

JWV remains concerned that VA wants to adopt a national standard of practice that could allow optometrists to perform surgery on the eyes of veterans, even though optometrists do not have the necessary level of medical education or surgical training to be a surgeon. While JWV acknowledges that optometrists play a very critical role in delivering quality eye health care for our nation's veterans, we strongly believe that optometrists should not be allowed to perform eye surgery on veterans because they do not have the requisite training or medical degree to do so.

JWV urges VA to immediately reinstate the language back into the SEOC: "only ophthalmologists can perform invasive procedures, including injections, lasers, and eye surgery." JWV remains ready to work with VA as well as HVAC and SVAC officials as VA seeks to establish national standards of practice roles for optometry and ophthalmology within the VA health system.

## **National Museum of American Jewish Military History (NMAJMH)**

Do you know about our museum located in our Headquarters' Building? JWV's leadership recognized the need to bring the stories of Jewish servicemen and women to the public because if Jews do not tell our stories, nor share our message, who will?

To that end, the National Museum of American Jewish Military History (located near Dupont Circle) was chartered in 1958. The museum is dedicated to recognizing, preserving, and commemorating the service, heroism, and sacrifices of Jewish men and women who have fought in war and contributed to the peace and freedom of America.

We urge you to tour the museum on your next visit to Washington, DC. I am sure you will be surprised to learn about the long and extensive U.S. military history of members of the Jewish faith.

### **Conclusion**

JWV has a long history in advocating for a strong national defense and fair recognition and compensation for veterans, servicemembers and their families. We are proud to share and work with Members of Congress and our colleagues at other VSOs. There is strength in numbers and working together we can continue to assure that all veterans receive the benefits earned and deserved.

We thank you for the opportunity to present our legislative and policy priorities to the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees today.

God Bless all those who have served and continue to serve in the Uniformed Services of the United States of America.

## Colonel Nelson L. Mellitz USAF, Ret. JWV National Commander 2022-2023



Colonel Mellitz continues an over 80-year family legacy of serving in the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America. Nelson served 32 years in the United States Air Force. He has been based at more than 13 different locations within the U.S. and overseas, serving in country or in support of the Area of Combat Operations during Vietnam through Iraqi Wars, His last assignment was in Iraq during 2005 and 2006. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1970 as an E-1 and was assigned to a Civil Engineering Unit as a Site Development Specialist. Over the next nine and half years he was promoted to Master Sergeant (E-7). Nelson was awarded a direct commission to 2nd Lieutenant in 1980 and assigned to the Acquisition Career field with a specialty in U.S. Government Contracting. Nelson was promoted to full Colonel in 1998. He has received over 20 military awards and decorations including the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Meritorious Citation. Colonel Mellitz was assigned to the Defense Contract Management Agency when the United States was attacked on September 11, 2001, and helped manage the deployment of billions of dollars' worth of military equipment for our troops throughout the world.

Colonel Mellitz has held many leadership positions in the Jewish War Veterans including National Vice Commander, National Quartermaster, National Chief of Staff, Commander of Post 126, New Jersey Council Commander, and Department of NJ Commander, among others.

Nelson is Vice President of World-Wide Business Operations for Land Sea Air Security, LLC. LSA Security develops, and markets proven military equipment to U.S. allies throughout the world: including drones, EOD vehicles, and electronic security fences.

He has been married to Debbie Markowitz Mellitz for 44 years and they have two successful adult daughters.

February 28, 2023



**Jewish War Veterans**  
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***JWV is A Jewish Voice for Veterans and  
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