



**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

New England Chapter

CORDWORD

The Monthly News Magazine of the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America



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CHAPTER COVID UPDATE



President's Update on Chapter COVID-19 Response, Advocacy and Activities.

I want to give everybody an update on what's occurred over the past few weeks. Even though the office has been closed, Exec. Dir. Mark Murphy, Gov't Rel. Dir. Kristen McCone Gordon and myself have been actively involved with several issues surrounding COVID-19 and its potential effects on our membership, as well as, the impact on the Chapter. I think it's important that you know we are continuing to work hard t
...continued on page 5.

NEPVA MOURNS LOSS



New England PVA mourns the passing of NEPVA Bass Trail Founder Eugene "Tiny" LaFontaine.

It's with great sadness I write this article, April 9 the founder of the NEPVA Bass Trail lost his long battle with cancer and passed away. Eugene 'Tiny' LaFontaine gave me a call over 21 years ago asking if I knew of some disabled anglers who would like to go fishing. It was the start of what became a labor of love and dedication which turned into the*continued on page 8.*



Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

Its been a very busy and challenging past few weeks. Most importantly though, I want each of you to know, even though our office still physically remains closed because of the Governor’s State of Emergency and Boston’s non-essential business restrictions, we are still functioning in full force remotely. Mark, Kristen and myself are in daily contact with each other, as well as, local, state and federal officials and organizations ensuring the needs and interests of our members and Chapter are expressed, if not met.

A significant issue that arose of concern was the creation of “Critical Standards of Care” by each New England state which could have a huge discriminatory impact on the medical care our members could receive if having to use a community care hospital, or the VA, do to a reduction of medical resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. Read more about this in and several other pandemic related issues in my Chapter COVID Update on page 5. As these things unfold, please watch your inboxes for surveys and questionnaires, as we need your feedback to help emphasize and/or quantify the issues we’re advocated for on your behalf.

Another impact on the Chapter this pandemic unfortunately has effected is our election process, and as such, the Board of Directors unanimously agreed to temporarily postpone it. As untimely as this is, its for the safety and health of everyone involved. For details of how/when the Board will proceed with the election, please read the letter on page 6.

One final thought during this pandemic, self-admittedly as we might all feel overly frustrated from being unnaturally locked down and isolated, we should be conscious not to be too short-sighted or critical of one-another. Regardless of the circumstances or past history, we don’t know what other people might be experiencing in their lives at the moment and, in the end, we’re all simply hoping to make it through these unsettling times safe and healthy on the other side.

Michael G. Negrete
President and Paralyzed Veteran

From the Director’s Desk

Mark Murphy, Chapter Executive Director



I hope you are well during these incredibly challenging times. Since the temporary closing of our Chapter office on March 17th I have been working from home, where I am able to still execute the day to day operations of NEPVA such as responding to emails, receiving phone calls to the office which are forwarded to me, and participating in relevant conference calls and PVA related webinars. Jerry and Kristen are also working from home. Although our Chapter office is closed, I have traveled into West Roxbury 3 times now from my residence in Brighton to just check in on the office and receive any important mail. All seems to be in order in the office, albeit the parking lot and building are very quiet and completely empty!

Something we are continuing to look at and document is how this pandemic is affecting our members, both individually and collectively, here in New England. As you know so well, the spinal cord injury and disease (SCI/D) population is one of VA’s most susceptible populations to COVID-19. Our members with SCI are not only in a high-risk group for the virus, but also for other health issues and the disruption of daily life, including the ability to access essential services and supplies. Many of these needs are immediate, and some may have a significant long-term impact. Over the past couple of weeks, I participated in a conference call and webinar with PVA National leadership and other Chapters/members. These kinds of communications have been enormously informative in learning about the impact of this pandemic on Chapters and members across the nation. In case you are interested, check out the website <https://pva.org/covid-19/> as it’s a great resource outlining PVA’s COVID-19 response.

While we were all disappointed to learn about the canceling of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Oregon, in addition to other important annual events and programs that many of our members very much look forward to every year, at NEPVA we remain deeply committed to continue providing the services our members depend on. Please stay safe, and if our staff can do anything to support you in any way please do not hesitate to reach out to me!

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

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Vice President	Mike Guilbault
Treasurer	Peter Moore
Secretary	Mike Moran

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad Carlson	Mark Sanders
Peter Falcione	Dan Shaul
Wayne Ross	

NATIONAL DIRECTOR TO PVA

Neal Williams

STAFF

Executive Director Mark Murphy
Govt. Relations Dir. Kristen McCone Gordon
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Office Volunteer Denise Pease

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PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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Bass Trail Liaison	Jim Wallack
Community Outreach	Mike Guilbault
CordWord Editor	Michael Negrete
Communications Director	Michael Negrete
Membership Officer	Mike Guilbault
MS/ALS Liaison	Peter Falcione
Peer Mentor Representative	Mike Guilbault
Sports Director	Mike Guilbault
Assistant Sports Director	Michael Moran
Volunteer Coordinator	Mark Murphy
Women Veterans' Liaison	Vacant

CHAPTER HOSPITAL LIAISONS

VAMC

Brockton SCIU Bldg 8
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Togus
West Haven
West Roxbury
White River Junction
Northampton

CHL

Dan Shaul
Vacant
Mike Moran
Neal Williams
Peter Falcione
Mike Guilbault
Mike Moran
Tim Kelly

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CordWord is the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America's (New England PVA) monthly magazine that covers news, health, research, lifestyle and issues of interest and concern to Veterans and others with spinal cord injury and disease. Anyone interested in submitting an article to *CordWord* should email media@newenglandpva.org. The assertions and opinions expressed in articles and announcements in *CordWord* reflect the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the New England PVA. New England PVA can in no way whatsoever be held responsible for the content of such views nor can it be held liable for any direct or indirect damage that may arise from such views.

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A Message from Dr. Stephen Yerkovich, Chief of Medical Services at PVA

via PVA.org



Dr. Stephen Yerkovich, Chief of Medical Services at PVA, wants you to be aware that COVID-19 is a serious health risk to society, especially older adults and people with serious medical conditions such as spinal cord injury/disease, lung disease, heart disease, and diabetes. On March 16th, the White House developed a 15 Days to Slow the Spread initiative. All individuals are encouraged to practice

social distancing. This effort can help slow the spread of the COVID-19. PVA wants our veterans, staff, and everyone in our communities to stay safe! The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued guidelines for prevention that include:

- Keep space between yourself and others. Avoid crowds.
- Avoid touching surfaces in public places as much as possible.
- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid all non-essential air and mass transit travel. Avoid all cruise travel.
- Stay home as much as possible.

More information on COVID-19 and CDC-recommended precautions is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>.

PVA COVID-19 Member Guidance

via PVA.org



The spinal cord injury and disease (SCI/D) population is one of VA's most susceptible populations to the novel corona virus. All VA SCI/D Centers will adopt a "no visitor" stance, meaning no outside visitors will be permitted to see inpatients. Exceptions will

be when veterans are in their last stages of life or any other extenuating circumstance.

Routine SCI/D admissions including annual examinations and respite will be rescheduled. If you are experiencing difficulty gaining access to your SCI/D team or need acute admission and are denied, please contact one of our service officers near you.

Outpatient clinics are only accepting urgent appointments. Non-urgent, routine appointments are being rescheduled to a later date or scheduled as a telehealth appointment when feasible.

If you have symptoms, or think you may have come in contact with the corona virus, contact your provider before visiting your local VA medical center or doctor's office.

Contact your local VA for up to date information as this continues to evolve.

- For Information on the novel coronavirus: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/>
- For Information on the visitor policy for SCI: <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5400>
- [FACT SHEET](#) - Updated COVID-19 Guidance for the VA Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders (SCI/D) Centers

PVA COVID-19 Response Webinar: An Update on VA's SCI/D System of Care

Heather Ansley, PVA Associate Executive Director of Government Relations

Please attend PVA's upcoming webinar covering the response of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) SCI/D System of Care to the coronavirus pandemic. Dr. I. Manosha Wickremasinghe, MD Executive Director, SCI/D System of Care will provide updates on health care issues important to veterans with spinal cord injury or disease. Dr. Wickremasinghe will also answer questions live during the webinar from PVA members.

To ensure the webinar covers the top SCI/D areas of concern for our members, you're asked to please send your questions for Dr. Wickremasinghe to Heather Ansley, AED of Government Relations, at heathera@pva.org by Tuesday, April 28th.

Topic: PVA COVID-19 Response Webinar: An Update on VA's SCI/D System of Care

When: May 6, 2020, from 02:00-3:00 PM EDT

Please register in advance to attend this webinar: <https://pva.zoom.us/j/910111111111>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information on how joining the webinar either online or by phone. If you're unable to attend the webinar it will be recorded for viewing at a later time.

Chapter COVID-19 Response, Updates and Info

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President



I want to give everybody an update on what's occurred over the past few weeks. Even though the office has been closed, Exec. Dir. Mark Murphy, Gov't Rel. Dir. Kristen McCone Gordon and myself have been actively involved with several issues surrounding COVID-19 and its potential effects on our membership, as well as, the impact on the Chapter. I think its important that you know we are continuing to work hard to support

each of you and the Chapter during these tempestuous times. If there are any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly.

Government Relations/Advocacy

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, there was growing concern within the disability advocacy community that the needs and rights of people with disabilities were being overlooked by Congressional leadership. In response, we promptly contacted the New England congressional delegation to request their support for increased funding for programs supporting people with disabilities during this pandemic. We remain in close contact with our colleagues at PVA national and will continue to advocate on behalf of NEPVA members on Capitol Hill.

We've also been closely monitoring how each state is planning for hospitals to be overwhelmed, and what affect those plans could potentially have on our members and the disabled community at large. Given the magnitude of the COVID-19 response, states across the country are producing a "Crisis Standards of Care" document which outlines guidance to hospitals on how to triage and modify the traditional level of care during this emergency. We are working closely with our partners across New England to review any guidance released during this crisis and advocate on behalf of our members and the larger disability community.

We've also been in contact with VA Boston Healthcare system Director Ng and SCI/D Chief Dr. Sabharwal, who oversee the care provided throughout New England's SCI/D Hub and spokes, in regards to the VA's triage and medical care of veterans with SCI/D during the pandemic. We're awaiting other information/actions before contacting the other New England VA system Directors directly who care for SCI/D veterans.

PVA/COVID Related Member Support

- We've participated in several teleconferences and webinars as they relate to PVA's efforts to meet the needs of our membership both in the services they directly provide through Medical and the Veterans Benefit services.
- PVA's Veterans Benefits Dept. wants every member to know that all of their National Service Officers, although working remotely, are still working normal hours and regularly checking the voicemail and email throughout the day. If anybody needs any assistance they can still call their local NSO. See page for a list of New England NSO contacts.
- We continue to distribute COVID information related from PVA as quickly as possible via email, Facebook and website.

- If you receive a survey request from the Chapter or PVA, please take a few minutes to complete, as the information vital to advocacy and legislative efforts.

Chapter Fundraising

- Because of the anticipated decrease in donations, we've applied for 6 COVID related relief/support grants ranging from \$1000 to \$25,000. Some of which are completely unrestricted funds. We'll have to wait and see how many actually are approved and will report back.

Chapter Operations

- We applied for the federal government's Payment Protection Program (PPP) through Dedham Savings bank. Unfortunately, they notified us that all funds have been exhausted, but did put us on a wait list in the event a second round of funding becomes available.
- We've created a COVID-19 response working document which we hope to use now and in the future for a variety of purposes - fundraising, advocacy, after action info, etc.
- We're still maintaining most normal operating functions while working remotely.
- Through remote access, office staff is still able to keep up with most everything needed, the exception being some hard-copy documentation, but nothing negatively impacting the Chapter.
- Any mail or packages destined for the office are being redirected to our Admin/Bookkeeper's home address.

Again, if anybody has any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me directly. You can always reach me directly via email michael@newenglandpva.org or at 857-229-8825.



STOP COVID-19

Protect yourself and others from getting sick

- +6ft+
Avoid close contact
- Clean your hands often
- Stay at Home
- Healthy Lifestyle



**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

New England Chapter

Chapter Election Postponement due to COVID-19

Dear Chapter Members,

During this unprecedented time in our nation's history, one that's creating a great deal of uncertainty in our daily lives – I want you to know the health and safety of our membership, employees and community is our top priority and we're committed to protecting those around us.

In continuing to closely monitor the fluid circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chapter Board of Directors held a Special meeting via teleconference on March 27, 2020 to discuss the effects of the pandemic on the Chapter, including its implication on the 2020 Chapter elections which processes normally start on April 1, 2020 with the formation of the Election committee.

During the meeting, it was unanimously agreed in the best interest of everyone's safety, to postpone the election, in its entirety, until such time as it is deemed safe to conduct and complete all aspects required. The following Board positions are affected by this postponement and will continue in full force, privilege and responsibility until such time as the election processes are able to be completed in their entirety.

President – Michael Negrete Vice President – Mike Guilbault
Director – Mark Sanders Director – Dan Shaul

The Board of Directors continues to communicate and meet regularly to review the status of Massachusetts's State of Emergency and the City of Boston's mandated social distancing guidelines to determine at which point it is safe, for all those involved, to conduct the required election processes. As soon as this is determined, a notice to the Chapter membership will be immediately distributed, as widely as possible, providing the updated election schedule of dates.

The Board of Directors and I appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we all navigate these unprecedented times and challenges to help keep each other safe and healthy.

If there are any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me directly via email at michael@newenglandpva.org or phone at 857-229-8829.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Negrete
Chapter President and Paralyzed Veteran

cc: Chapter Board of Directors
Chapter Executive Director Mark Murphy
PVA National Director Neal Williams
Chapter Correspondence File

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From the Hill

Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director

I hope this finds all of you healthy and safe.

On March 27, President Trump signed into law H.R. 748, the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act,” or CARES Act. The CARES Act is the third piece of legislation passed by Congress to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation provided the VA with nearly \$20 billion to respond to the coronavirus. Of that amount, approximately \$14.4 billion was provided for VA medical services to address increased demand for health care at VA facilities. \$2.1 billion was provided for community care to meet emergency room and urgent care demands related to the virus. For more information on the specific authorities included in the legislation, and how they may benefit you, please review the most recent Washington Update on page 10.

Here in New England, we have been working collaboratively with both our national PVA office as well as state disability organizations to ensure that the rights of our members are protected during this pandemic. In our outreach to New England’s congressional delegation, we made our

concerns and priorities clear and will continue to advocate on your behalf as future legislation is developed.

I need your help on two issues we are closely monitoring.

1. I need to know: if your home health care attendant has any issues accessing personal protective equipment (PPE); and,
2. If you purchase supplemental care and the provider of that care has told you that rates may soon increase to cover PPE to protect them and you from potential COVID-19 exposure.

Please contact me via email at kristen@newenglandpva.org or 800-660-1181 option #3, if you have experienced either of these issues, as the information you provide will help both our chapter and national advocate on your behalf to the VA and members of Congress.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Be well.

PVA Cancels All Remaining 2020 Sports and Recreational Events

via pva.org



**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

A Message from the PVA Sports Team:

After careful consideration, due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, our sports and recreation team, following the guidance of our Executive Committee, has decided to cancel the remaining sports and recreation events for FY 2020. This will cover events that

were scheduled to take place through June 30th. We are saddened to cancel these events, but the safety and health of our members and all participants are our first priority.

The sports team remains dedicated to bringing you the quality and quantity of opportunities in sports and recreation that you have been accustomed to. In the meantime, we would like for you to check out our online content as a way to stay engaged and receive the latest updates on our sports and recreation programs. Please visit us on our Paralyzed Veterans of America (Sports) Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pvasports>. We look forward to continuing to serve you and staying connected during these challenging times.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our staff.

Combating Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness During COVID-19

via pva.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) wants our veterans and their caregivers to overcome loneliness during this time of social distancing.

While sheltering in place helps us stop the spread of COVID-19, the decreased social engagement and lessening of medical visits can lead to feelings of helplessness, isolation, and loneliness. For those living with mental health issues and chronic diseases, we may see a worsening of symptoms. There are things we can do to take care of ourselves and help #BeThere for others. If you are able, try to spend a little time outdoors each day, even if just for a few minutes on your front porch, as there are many benefits to being outside. Keep your mind occupied and take a break from the news by working on free coursework, listening to audiobooks, watching virtual concerts, plays, & tours of museums, or calling

or writing friends and loved ones. Don’t have Internet access? For the next two months, Comcast is providing free Internet service for disabled veterans.

If you do find yourself struggling with increased anxiety, depression or other psychological symptoms, you can call or text mental health professionals at Psychological Health Center of Excellence Psychological Recourse Center, call or chat with peers at Veterans 4 Warriors, or use some of the self-help strategies at Make the Connection. If you need help right away, we encourage you to call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, and press “1” if you are a veteran, texting 838255, or chatting via their <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/hotline>.

Sad Days for Our NEPVA Bass Trail

Mike Guilbault, Chapter VP & Sports Director



It's with great sadness I write this article, April 9 the founder of the NEPVA Bass Trail lost his long battle with cancer and passed away. Eugene 'Tiny' LaFontaine gave me a call over 21 years ago asking if I knew of some disabled anglers who would like to go fishing. It was the start of what became a labor of love and dedication which turned into the NEPVA Bass Trail.

Condolences to his family and loved ones and all those whose lives he enriched with his dedication to grow the Bass Trail into the successful



group of tournaments it has become. We celebrated our 20th Anniversary last year, Tiny never stopped getting new boaters, anglers and sponsors involved. Luckily, he has taken others under his wing and taught them to continue it.

Tiny will be missed but never forgotten and our Bass Trail is a legacy that shows what a dedicated, caring person he was. I was lucky to call him a friend and he grew our trail into one large family of those who loved Bass Fishing. I will never forget the pontoon boat cruises on Lake Winnepesaukee after our Tournament there each September. Always a fun time full of music, laughter and the joy on Alex's face when Tiny said 'Alex come here and drive the boat'. Captain Alex was talented on the drums too and he joined the band at the post awards and dinner party. There are just too many great fun times had by all over the years. Tiny just know that they will all continue as we try to do a job as well as you have making such fun happen in many more future Tournaments. May you rest in peace and go catch some big one's pain free.

We can't thank him and his fellow American Eagle Bass Anglers enough for reaching out to us so long ago and making the one-day Tournament on the Charles River grow into the wonderful Trail we now have with three events each year. We had one year we had a tournament in all 6 of our New England states but sadly we couldn't keep that going. The 3 tournaments we hold now are in wonderful venues which he spent many hours finding and creating relationships with them, they look forward to our events held there each year! I can't even begin to tell so many fun stories of adventures we've had through the years and I'm sure every participant can also say the same. I know a few of my favorites are when he told me to cut through the grass to the campfire at Camp Robindel on Lake Winnepesaukee, NH. Those there know why he did and have a

pretty funny memory of it, you got me on that one Tiny! There was also the time I failed to make a corner in the rain and as Tiny walked up the hill at Pine Tree Camp he said, 'Mike what are you doing under the building?' My failure to make the turn sent me down a steep hill and under one of the cabins along the shore of North Pond in Maine. He then helped me back into my chair and laughed as I told him how I ended up there!

Sadly, I also must mention a longtime volunteer boat captain from CT. I just found out that Greg Mazur, who was a New England Chapter member passed away Monday April 6 from COVID-19 and his wife remains in the hospital on a ventilator. Best wishes for her to recover from this horrible virus causing us to deal with a pandemic and take precautions like many of us have never seen.



Greg had been coming to all our Bass Trail events for so many years I can't remember him not being there. I know he also volunteered to take anglers fishing tournaments in his home state with the Major Steven Roy Andrews Fishing Outreach Program, Condolences to his family and loved ones and may they know what a big hearted man he was doing all he did to make it possible for many to get a chance to fish who would not have been able to without volunteers like Greg. Many events we love and look forward to having have been canceled this year but it's to keep us all safe to enjoy them in the future. Stay safe and healthy please.





PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE

PVA Washington Update Volume 26, Number 7

\$2 Trillion COVID Relief Bill Includes Provisions Impacting Veterans with Disabilities

On March 27, President Trump signed into law H.R. 748, the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act,” or CARES Act. The CARES Act is the third piece of legislation passed by Congress to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

The legislation provided VA with nearly \$20 billion to respond to the coronavirus. Of that amount, approximately \$14.4 billion was provided for VA medical services to address increased demand for health care at VA facilities. \$2.1 billion was provided for community care to meet emergency room and urgent care demands related to the virus.

Also included in the bill were several authorities to assist VA in meeting veterans’ needs:

- **Telemental Health Services for Isolated Veterans:** Expands telehealth services for veterans to provide them with mental health services during this time. This provision gives VA the ability to enter into agreements with telecommunications companies to provide temporary, complimentary fixed and mobile broadband services.
- **Treatment at State Homes During Public Health Emergency:** Continues payments and provides resources to State Homes during this public health emergency.
- **Modifications to Veteran Directed Care Program:** Modifies the veteran directed care program by temporarily waiving the in-person home visit requirements to enroll in the program and permits veterans to receive telephone and telehealth visits as an alternative.
- **Prosthetic Appliances through Non-Department Providers:** Ensures veterans with limb loss can utilize community-based prosthetic providers.
- **Waivers of Pay Caps for VA Employees During Public Health Emergencies:** Waives federal pay caps for VA employees responding during COVID-19 emergencies, so they can be compensated for all hours worked.
- **Personal Protective Equipment for VA Home Health Workers:** Requires VA to provide personal protective equipment to VA community-based home health workers.
- **Clarification of Treatment of Payments for Purposes of Eligibility for Veterans Pension and other Veterans Benefits:** Ensures that veterans receiving a 2020 Recovery Rebate under the CARES Act do not suffer a loss or reduction of any VA benefits.
- **Telehealth for Case Managers and Homeless Veterans:** Expands telehealth capabilities for case managers and homeless veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program.
- **Financial Assistance for Supportive Services for Very Low-Income Veteran Families:** Waives any limits on grant amounts and rates for Per Diem payments for temporary housing to maximize social distancing within the vulnerable homeless veteran population.
- **Modifications to Comprehensive Service Programs for Homeless Veterans:** Waives funding limits for financial assistance for supportive

services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing during the public health emergency.

- **Grants for Construction of State Extended Care Facilities:** Supports modifications or alterations to existing care facilities in state homes to help respond to the coronavirus.

The legislation also contained a number of provisions important to people with disabilities and their families including:

Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education – \$172.1 billion for additional investments in healthcare, state and local government prevention efforts, purchasing medical supplies, vaccine development and supports for a host of education and social services programs. Highlights include:

- \$4.3 billion to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support federal, state, and local public health agencies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus.
- \$100 billion for new grants to hospitals, public entities, not-for-profit entities, and Medicare and Medicaid enrolled suppliers and institutional providers to cover unreimbursed health care-related expenses or lost revenues attributable to the public health emergency resulting from the coronavirus.
- \$955 million for a number of Administration for Community Living (ACL) programs including \$50,000,000 for Aging and Disability Resource Centers and \$85,000,000 for Centers for Independent Living.
- \$200 million to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to assist nursing homes with infection control and support states’ efforts to prevent the spread of coronavirus in nursing homes.
- \$360 million for Department of Labor programs that provide training and supportive services for dislocated workers, seniors, migrant farmworkers, and homeless veterans.

Policy changes within the bill included a section allowing payment for direct support professionals to aid individuals with disabilities in hospital settings in order to reduce lengths of stay, extension of the Money Follows the Person program through November 30, 2020 and a requirement that Medicare Part D plans provide up to a 90-day supply of prescription medications, if requested, by a beneficiary during the emergency period.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development received over \$7 billion to minimize evictions and lessen the impact on housing insecurity caused by job loss and other consequences related to COVID-19.

As part of the CARES Act, eligible persons will also be able to receive a cash payment of up to \$1,200 (\$2,400 for those married filing jointly) called a Recovery Rebate. The CARES Act instructs the Treasury to issue Recovery Rebates based on a person’s 2018 or 2019 income tax filing. If a person has not filed taxes in either year, the legislation allows the use of a person’s Form SSA-1099 or Form RRB-1099. On Wednesday, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said that recipients of Social Security

retirement, disability, and survivor benefits who are not required to file a tax return will receive their payments without further action on their part. PVA and other disability and veterans service organizations have called on the Administration to ensure that similarly situated veterans who receive VA benefits also receive their rebates without needing to file a return.

Despite these provisions, the legislation failed to include a number of important policies considered critical by the disability advocacy community including increased support for home and community-based programs, transportation services for people with disabilities, dissemination of assistive technology, and stronger protections for people with disabilities in state and local responses to the pandemic. We will be working to include these and additional veterans benefits in subsequent packages.

Update on PVA COVID-19 Response

On April 9, PVA held a webinar for chapters and members about our response to the coronavirus, including our efforts to work with policy makers in Washington, DC and in VA SCI/D Centers and Regional Offices around the country. The webinar included welcome messages from PVA National President David Zurfluh and PVA Executive Director Carl Blake, as well as brief presentations from Medical Services Director Amanda Milisits; Associate Executive Director of Veterans Benefits, Peter Gaytan; Associate Executive Director of Government Relations, Heather Ansley; and Communications Director Liz Deakin. The main focus of the webinar was to answer questions from our members about their concerns with

the pandemic. The webinar recording is available [HERE](#).

Prior to the webinar, PVA conducted a survey of our members to determine the impact COVID-19 is having on their health and their ability to access health care through VA. Over 1000 PVA members responded to the survey. Information about the survey results is available [here](#).

For the most up to date information about PVA's COVID response and resources, please continue to visit our COVID-19 webpage: <https://pva.org/covid-19/>.

PVA Seeks Temporary Increase in Aid & Attendance

Many PVA members rely on personal care attendants to help them with activities of daily living. However, attendant care is very expensive and often the Aid and Attendance (A&A) benefits provided to eligible veterans do not fully cover this cost. In fact, some PVA members who pay for full-time attendant care incur costs that far exceed the amount they receive as Special Monthly Compensation/Aid and Attendance beneficiaries. In March, a PVA member informed us that his attendant care costs could increase as much as 25 percent as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Since that time, we have heard from other members with similar concerns.

PVA's Legislative Team has been working with Congress to address this looming crisis by advocating for a temporary increase in Special Monthly Compensation/Aid and Attendance benefits by as much as 25 percent to offset higher costs associated with the ongoing health crisis. Our concern is that without proper attendant care our veterans could be forced to seek

residential placements, which could endanger their long-term health, and increase VA costs.

After an unsuccessful attempt to include this provision in the third COVID relief bill that passed late last month, we are working with congressional staff to get the provision included in the next relief bill. Lawmakers are expected to begin work on this measure soon, and our efforts center on firming up the need for this proposal. If you use A&A dollars to pay for self-purchased care and you pay more for your care than the amount of money you receive from VA; have seen an increase in the rates you pay for your care that is related to the pandemic; or if you have been told that rates will increase as a result of the pandemic, we need to hear from you immediately. Please send a brief email describing your situation to PVA's National Legislative Director, Morgan Brown, at morganb@pva.org.

Disability Advocates Seek Greater Attention to Community Concerns in 4th COVID Bill

Although there were a number of important provisions included in the third COVID relief bill passed by Congress at the end of March, disability advocates were disappointed that many of their most critical requests were not included in that legislation. Of particular concern were the failure of Congress to designate direct support professionals or personal care attendants as essential personnel during the crisis, ensure paid family and medical leave for those caring for adults with disabilities,

and to instill strong protections for people with disabilities in the face of limited health care resources. As Congress prepares to develop a fourth package of COVID relief legislation, PVA and its allies in the disability community sent a letter to the congressional leadership outlining critical elements that should be included to ensure equal treatment for people with disabilities. For more information, please visit: <http://www.c-c-d.org/fichiers/FINAL-CCD-Asks-for-COVID-19-Package4.pdf>.

Know Your Neighbor and Resources Webinar

via South Coast Wheelchair Tennis Foundation



Please join us for the “Know Your Neighbor and Resources” webinar

We cordially invite you to attend the “Know Your Neighbor and Resources” Webinar on April 29th at 12:00pm hosted by the USTA New England’s Wheelchair Tennis Committee.

The webinar is geared towards any person or organization that is involved with wheelchair tennis in the New

England area. During the webinar, you will learn about USTA New England and USTA Nationals efforts to grow wheelchair tennis. We will provide you with information and resources to support your wheelchair tennis programming, including connecting you to other providers in the area so we can network together to promote wheelchair tennis.

Please contact Thomas Dodd at info@southcoastwheelchairtennis.org to receive the google calendar invite with details of webinar!

Thank you for the work you do to grow wheelchair tennis throughout New England!

Virtual FUN Coming Your Way!

via New England Healing Sports Association



Monday

NEHSA Facebook Video Series - Incident Reporting-SBAR

Tune in on our Facebook page for all things relating to the adaptive sports world!

Tuesday*

- 11:00 AM: Guided Yoga
Yoga for Beginners with Henley via Zoom
- 1:00 PM: Summer Sports Trivia with Henley
Summer sports with a friendly trivia challenge via Zoom and Kahoot
- 2:00 PM: Crafting Fun with Henley
Time to put your creativity to use, socialize virtually, and make a fun craft

Wednesday

- Mind Bender Puzzles will be posted weekly on Facebook

Thursday*

- 11:00 AM: Seated Yoga
Seated yoga session for all levels with a rotating instructors via Zoom!
- 1:00 PM: Pantry Snack Hacks
Healthy snack ideas and recipes coming your way! Join us on via Facebook Live!
- 2:00 PM: Virtual Games- Skribbl.io
Join Henley for a fun Pictionary-like game via Zoom and Skribbl.io. Take turns drawing themed words as others type out their guesses for points!

Friday

- Weekly Puzzle Challenge
Complete our puzzle and share your time on our Facebook post. [Click here to play!](#)

**Sign up required for T/Th Classes*

PVA Virtual Book Club

via Mary Hobbs, PVA Sports Dept.



**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

As part of our recreational efforts, please join us for an exciting new virtual book club that PVA Sports will be hosting!! We are very excited to launch this fun and engaging activity with our veterans!

The first book we chose is “The Great Alone,” by Kristin Hannah.

Please click on the link below to give you insight into the book and the author’s background; and let us know if you would like to join our reading group!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D92aQkGE6hE>

Spaulding Adaptive Sports is Going VIRTUAL!

via Mary K. Patstone, Executive Director, Spaulding Adaptive Sports Centers



SPAULDING™
ADAPTIVE SPORTS CENTERS

Spaulding Adaptive Sports is going VIRTUAL!

Dear Adaptive Sports Community Members,

During this time of great uncertainty and social distancing, it is more important than ever to stay connected and be mindful of our wellness while we navigate rough waters. We need to stay close to one another – we need our community.

With this in mind, Spaulding Adaptive Sport Centers will be moving to an all virtual platform for our programming through the end of May. Starting next week, we will be offering individual, group and social program opportunities. We will begin small and grow the opportunities as we develop additional curriculum choices.

These programs will be offered to our community free of charge and our clinicians and adaptive sports professionals will be utilizing the Zoom virtual platform from the safety of their own homes keeping us connected while respecting the bounds of social distancing.

Please consider joining us in our virtual community. The Zoom platform can be utilized from your smart phone, a tablet, laptop or standard home workstation. If you need assistance setting up Zoom, our staff will happily help you go through the steps for installation.

Connie Blake will continue to manage appointments through our website <https://sasc.spauldingrehab.org/> and she will be available on our standard registration line at 877-976-7272.

If you are not a current member of the SASC community, but want to participate, please go to our website and create an account for yourself. Once completed, you will be able to sign up through the calendar portal.

We are a strong, vibrant community and the whole SASC team is very excited to see you all online very soon!

Wishing you all health and wellness today and in the weeks to come.

Registration for virtual programming will open on Monday, March 23rd.

Programs will be free of charge through May.

Sincerely,

Mary K. Patstone
Executive Director, Spaulding Adaptive Sports Centers

Getting Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again with Indego® New VA Program offers eligible veterans an Indego® Exoskeleton at no cost.



What is Indego?

A robotic device that enables veterans to walk again.

Indego is an FDA-approved exoskeleton worn around the waist and legs that enables individuals paralyzed from spinal cord injuries to stand and walk, offering a new level of independence.

Indego can currently be used with spinal cord injury levels of T3 to L5 in community or home settings. The device offers:

- Lightweight, modular design
- Slim profile compatible with most wheelchairs
- Rapid setup and breakdown for easy transportation
- Can be used with forearm crutches or walker



Contact us today to find out if you are eligible to receive an Indego exoskeleton

Email: support.indego@parker.com

Phone: 844-846-3346



Connect With What Matters



Being there makes a difference

Recently the Ride-Away team joined forces with MobilityWorks so that we could provide our veterans with the largest selection of mobility solutions that best fit their physical capabilities and lifestyle. Veterans have unique needs so we treat each of them as individuals. First of all, we listen. Then, we work together find the best solution. Collectively, Ride-Away and MobilityWorks will continue to build on our mission to help veterans connect with who and what matters most.

MobilityWorks has more than 50 locations across the country with the largest selection of accessible vehicles and adaptive solutions:

- Minivans, full-size vans and trucks
- The latest in adaptive technology
- Complete maintenance and service
- Rental vans — veterans receive a 10% discount

MobilityWorks is committed to serving you. Contact us today so we can evaluate your needs and find a solution that best fits your lifestyle.



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781-222-3622

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5C David Drive
Essex Junction, VT 05452
802-222-0265

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Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only non-profit Veterans' Service Organization chartered by the U.S. Congress to support and advocate for the benefits and medical care of our country's armed forces Veterans who have experienced a spinal cord injury or dysfunction spanning conflicts from WWII thru Iraq and Afghanistan.

PVA has developed a unique expertise, on a wide variety of issues,

involving the special needs of our catastrophically injured members. PVA uses this expertise to be the leading advocate and supporter for:

- Quality health care for our members.
- Research and education.
- Benefits available, because of our members' military service.
- Civil rights that maximize the independence of our members.

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www.newenglandpva.org



**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

New England Chapter

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Retired Army Sergeant Terry Vereline crosses the finish line of the 2019 New York City Marathon after walking 26.2 miles in her ReWalk Exoskeleton. She received this device in 2014 and has used it to take nearly 1,000,000 steps in the past five years.

Did You Know That Paralyzed US Veterans May be Eligible For a ReWalk Exoskeleton?

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VA Partners with Treasury Department to Deliver Economic Impact Payments to Veterans and Survivors

via VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it is working directly with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Treasury Department

to ensure delivery of 'Economic Impact Payments' to Veterans and survivors who receive Compensation and Pension (C&P) benefit payments from VA without additional paperwork or IRS filings.

The 'Economic Impact Payments,' authorized by the Treasury Department under the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, will be issued automatically to recipients of non-taxable VA benefits who did not file annual income tax returns for 2018 or 2019. VA and the IRS have been collaborating since the passage of the CARES Act to ensure Veterans receive their EIP.

"Many have expressed concern that Veterans and their beneficiaries would be overlooked during the distribution of Economic Impact Payments from the CARES Act simply because they don't file an annual tax return," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This collaboration will ensure our Veterans receive CARES Act payments without any additional action or paperwork required."

Economic Impact Payments will be automatic for non-tax filing VA beneficiaries. For VA beneficiaries who filed a Form 1040 for 2018 or 2019, those payments will also be automatic. No further action is needed. They

can track the status of their payments on the Get My Payment tool on IRS.gov. For non-tax filing VA beneficiaries, please note their information will be loaded on this tool within the next few weeks.

For VA beneficiaries who didn't file a tax return in 2018 or 2019 and have a dependent, there is a special step they need to take, and the sooner the better. They should visit the Non-Filer: Enter Payment Info Here tool on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov). By quickly taking steps to enter information on the IRS website about them and their qualifying children, they can receive the \$500 per dependent child payment in addition to their \$1,200 individual payment.

VA recognizes that many non-tax filing beneficiaries have already begun using the IRS' EIP payment portal to provide the necessary data to IRS to receive their EIP. There will be no interruption to payments being processed using the IRS portal, and Veterans with Internet access are encouraged to continue providing information and track their EIP through the IRS portal.

For those who do not have access, or choose not to use the IRS portal, their EIP will be processed without further action on their part.

While no date for distribution has been set at this time, VA is securely sharing necessary beneficiary data with Treasury which will allow Treasury to begin issuance of Economic Impact Payments.

For more information on CARES Act 'Economic Impact Payments,' visit: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>.

VA's Telehealth System Grows as Veterans Have Access to Unlimited Data While Using VA Video Connect

via VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) announced, Veterans using VA Video Connect on their TracFone mobile phones through the

T-Mobile network, will no longer pay for data while using video telehealth technology to connect and meet with their VA health care teams.

TracFone Wireless, Inc is the fourth major wireless carrier to partner with VA to support Veterans who are using VA Video Connect.

T-Mobile, Sprint and Verizon began enabling Veterans to use VA Video Connect without data charges in 2019. VA Video Connect enables Veterans to video conference with their VA providers on their smartphone, tablet or computer from any location with an Internet connection.

"Our goal at VA is to provide the best health care experience for all Veterans regardless of where they live," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This new partnership with TracFone increases access for Veterans and ensures health care is accessible anywhere. Approximately 150,000 SafeLink customers can benefit from this application."

In fiscal year 2019, VA provided 2.6 million telehealth episodes of care to more than 900,000 Veterans, representing a 16% increase from the previous year in the number of Veterans receiving care via VA's telehealth services.

Visit [connected care](https://connectedcare.va.gov) for more information on VA's telehealth programs.

Visit VA's telehealth programs for more information. <https://connectedcare.va.gov>



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- Craft job search strategies to meet your employment goals.
- Create an effective LinkedIn profile.
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- And much more!



We Will:

- Provide one-on-one guidance to help you find **meaningful employment**.
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- Practice mock interviews to hone your skills before you interact with employers.
- Regularly communicate with you to track progress and identify other resources to assist in the job search process.
- Be a **Partner for Life** to assist you for the duration of your career.

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PAVE PROGRAM UPDATE

March 2020

PVA AND COVID-19

Respiratory complications are the leading cause of death for people with spinal cord injuries. The spinal cord control muscles that make lungs work and assists with the ability to produce a productive cough - and a productive cough is critical for lung clearance.



Due to this and other risk factors, COVID-19 is a particularly high-threat for many PVA members. Check out how PVA is taking care of our members and advocating on behalf of all people with disabilities during this pandemic on our website: pva.org/covid-19.

SUCCESS STORY- PRESTON CURRY

PVA member and US Army veteran Preston Curry has long been committed to serving other veterans. This commitment includes leadership positions with PVA's Mid-Atlantic Chapter, the Chesterfield County's Disability Services Board, and advocating on behalf of veterans with disabilities on Capitol Hill.

In May 2019, Preston started working with PAVE Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Allison Borden to determine what kind of paid employment would be best for him and his family. Given his volunteer leadership roles, he was not sure if full time or part time employment would be the best option. Preston also wasn't sure which industry or type of opportunities would be a good fit. He had held several jobs since his injury in 1995, but did not find them to be fulfilling.



Preston spent time working with Allison refining his resume, interview skills, and other aspects of the employment process. They worked together to identify opportunities that fit his interests and would be meaningful. Ultimately they determined that a part-time position would be best for now.

In January, Preston applied for a position as an Administrative Assistant with the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education. In early March he interviewed for the position and received an offer shortly thereafter with a start date in March. DVS transitioned to "work from home" but onboarded Preston and another new employee on the promised start date.

Read more about Preston [here](#).

"I'm empowered knowing I'm ABLE to do anything I want"

IMPACT + OPPORTUNITIES

28 Client Placements

- 22 Paid Employment Opportunities
- 6 Educational Opportunities



85 Total Placements through March

CLIENT PROFILE

23 Veterans/ Transitioning Service Members

6 Caregivers and Families

2 PVA Members



PAVE CONNECT

PAVE Connect, our virtual employment initiative, provides timely and relevant career information when and where veterans and their families need it. Veterans, military spouses and veteran caregivers can engage experts on a variety of different topics including resumes, interview techniques, and going back to school. The program has pivoted to address the COVID-19 pandemic— learn more at www.pva.org/paveconnect

"PAVE does an amazing job of helping ALL veterans with their job search and career advice. They helped me immensely through a recent transition and I encourage anyone who is looking to move in, move out, or move up in their dream organization to attend a PAVE Connect session. Even those of us who have long since transitioned out of the military will find these sessions invaluable.

Invest in yourself with knowledge and advice from PAVE experts and have your battle buddies, shipmates, and Air Force buddies join you in this quest to better yourself and one another."

- Randy, USAF Veteran, PAVE Client



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