



CORDWORD

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

New England Chapter



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TREATING “LONG COVID”

VA AIR REPORT



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Treating Veterans with lingering “Long COVID”

While everyone is looking forward to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pittsburgh VA clinicians have their eye on a long-term issue with the disease – a health condition known as “long COVID.”

In January, Pittsburgh VA opened a clinic for Veterans who have recovered from the acute stage of COVID but who continue to have debilitating [....continued on page 8.](#)



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The VA MISSION Act requires Secretary McDonough to publish the AIR report in the Federal Register and submit it to Congress and a presidentially appointed AIR Commission. [.... continued on page 12.](#)

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

Vehicle Donation Program

We'll use the proceeds from the sale of your car, truck, RV or boat to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes.



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Vehicle donations to PVA are tax-deductible! Most vehicles are sold through local used-car markets. Our vehicle donation program works to get the highest return per vehicle and handles all the paperwork, too! Whether your vehicle sells for \$500 or less, more than \$500, or more than \$5000, you will be provided with the proper donation tax receipt(s).



Call 877-900-VETS or donate online at pva.careasy.org

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ON THE COVER: Women's Vietnam Memorial, Washington, DC.

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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Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

I have a great concern for our Chapter members. As our office volunteers try to reach out to them, they're finding a significant amount of phone numbers are disconnected, no longer in service, or just incorrect. This makes it extremely difficult for the Chapter to pass timely information on to you. More importantly though, we're unable to directly check-in with you to see if you have any immediate needs or experiencing any difficulties with your care which we could assist with. We're here as a resource to serve you. To ensure you receive the benefits you've earned, the quality healthcare you've deserve, and in a timely and efficient manner. If you're not, and having issues of any kind, please let us know. Call the office anytime at 800-660-1181

We're also here to help provide other programs and services to help enrich your life, health and well-being. Whether this is adaptive sports, peer mentoring, volunteering, employment or simply providing a safe place to talk to someone.

In any of these cases, please call the office and let us know what we can do for you. We want to know what your needs are and how we best we meet them. No one should be left alone to fend for themselves. That's not why you joined PVA and that's not who PVA is.

Speaking of programs and events. Here's a small list of things to coming up in the next few months and later in the year:

New England PVA Annual Membership Gala

June 26, 2022 – 12-5pm

Location: Lakeview Pavilion – Foxboro, MA

Currently, must be fully vaccinated to attend, but may change depending on CDC, State, and VA requirements and/or recommendations.

PVA National Wheelchair Basketball Clinic hosted by New England PVA

August 12-14th, 2022

Location: DCU Center – Worcester, MA (Tentative)

PVA National Disc Golf Clinic hosted by New England PVA

September 10, 2022

Location: TBD

New England PVA Charity Golf Classic

September 26, 2022

Location: Marlborough Country Club, MA

PVA National Bocchia Tournament Series “Kick-Off” hosted by New England PVA

November 5 – 6, 2022

Location: Brockton VAMC Gym

New England PVA Billiards Tournament/Fundraiser

Date: TBD

Location: Boston Billiards – Nashua, NH

If you have an interest in participating in, or volunteering to assist with, any of these activities please contact Executive Director Steve Robinson at the Chapter office 800-660-1181 or email at steve@newenglandpva.org.

Circling back to the beginning, I want you to know, without any doubts, your New England Chapter is here for you. Please don't hesitate to call or email us. We sincerely want to hear from you and know how we can best serve you.

Michael G. Negrete
New England Chapter President
and Paralyzed Veteran

2022 Chapter Election Results

Chapter elections were conducted this past month for Class A Directors, Vice President and President.

Ballots with Candidate statements and postage paid return envelopes were mail to each of the Chapter's 768 members. Of the 768 ballots mailed, the Chapter received 92 back.

The following are the winning results of the election. Elected terms start on July 1, 2022 and are each for two years 2022-2024.

President

Michael Negrete

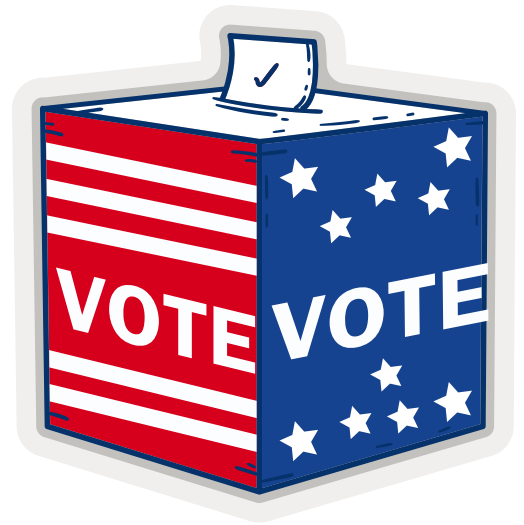
Vice President

Wayne Ross

Class A Directors

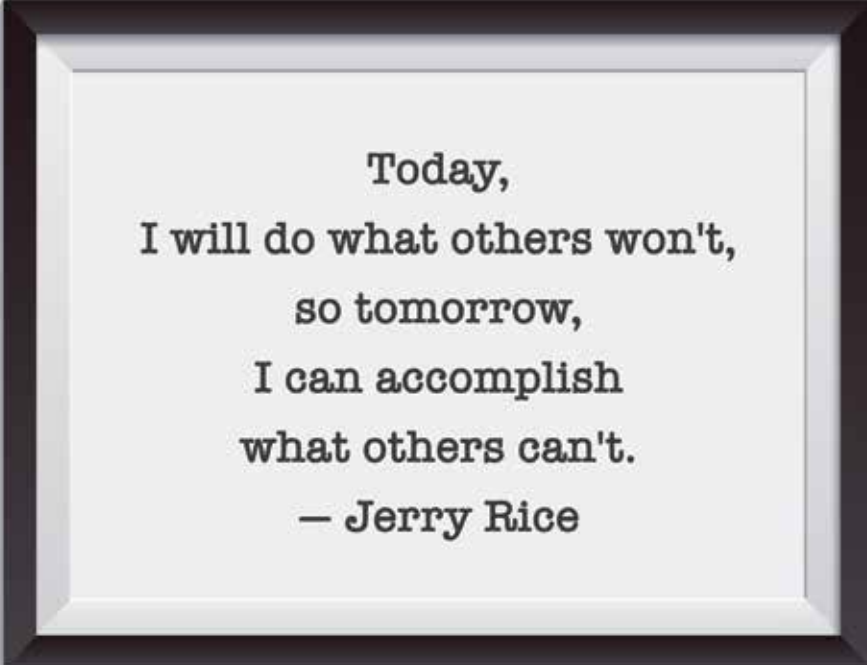
Debra Freed

Mark Sanders



Each Candidate has been mailed the required documentation to accept and acknowledge their duties and responsibilities as a member of the Board of Directors.

For those Candidates who were not elected, please note there are Director vacancies still to be filled via Presidential appointments. If you still have a desire to serve in Chapter leadership, please email Chapter President Michael Negrete at michael@newenglandpva.org.



Today,
I will do what others won't,
so tomorrow,
I can accomplish
what others can't.
— Jerry Rice



FROM the HILL

Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of joining Chapter President Michael Negrete and NEPVA members Debra Freed and Chuck Houle to participate in PVA’s annual Pushing Access Forward seminar. Though the seminar and corresponding congressional meetings were

held virtually again this year due to the pandemic, it was a very successful week spent learning of the issues affecting members across the country and of PVA’s compelling legislative solutions to address them.

Our NEPVA delegation had an opportunity to meet with staff of many of our New England Congressional offices. Over the course of three days, we briefed the staff of Senator Sanders, Senator Murphy, Senator Blumenthal, Senator Shaheen, Senator Collins, Congressman McGovern, Congressman Moulton, Congresswoman Pingree, and Congressman Golden. We also had the honor to speak directly with Congressman Larson and Senator Whitehouse, and are thrilled to announce that both Members agreed to cosponsor the legislative issues that we discussed.

In large part due to Michael, Debra, and Chuck’s willingness to share their personal experiences and take the time to serve our Chapter, we received very positive and promising feedback during our discussions. I look forward to keeping you informed of the New England Delegation’s official pledges of support for these issues and continuing our conversations with staff in the district offices.

As always, if you would like to join our growing advocacy team, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at kristen@newenglandpva.org. In the meantime, please review the issues below and reach out to your Representatives if you don’t see their names listed as a cosponsor to our critical pieces of legislation.

PVA’s 2022 Legislative Priorities

I’m thrilled to announce Paralyzed Veterans of America’s 2022 legislative priorities. These issues reflect areas of concern for our members, as both veterans with spinal cord injury or disease and people living with disabilities. However, as an organization and a Chapter, we remain a steadfast advocate for all veterans and all people with disabilities.

While the complete list of our 2022 priorities can be found on our website, I’d like to share a few of the issues that we discussed in great detail with the New England Congressional Delegation.

Improve Access to Transportation for Catastrophically Disabled Veterans

We continued our advocacy on the AUTO for Veterans Act, which would allow eligible veterans to receive an Automobile Allowance Grant every ten years for the purchase of an adapted vehicle.

During our congressional briefings, we emphasized that access to an adapted vehicle is essential to the mobility and health of catastrophically disabled veterans who need a reliable means of transportation in order

to work, attend medical appointments, and maintain independence. We also discussed how the substantial costs of modified vehicles, coupled with inflation, present a very significant financial hardship for our members who need to replace their primary mode of transportation once it reaches its lifespan. Finally, we raised the needs of our members with non-service-connected injuries, and advocated that they should receive the same type of adaptive automobile equipment as veterans with service-connected injuries.

Current New England Congressional Delegation Cosponsors of the AUTO Act: Senator Susan Collins (lead Senate sponsor); Senator Hassan; Senator



King; Senator Whitehouse; Senator Blumenthal; Congresswoman Pingree; Congressman Golden; Congressman Moulton; Congresswoman Pressley; Congresswoman Hayes; Congressman Himes; Congresswoman Kuster; and Congressman Larson.

Strengthen the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA)

We also discussed our Chapter’s support for the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act. This legislation would: 1) strengthen ACAA administrative enforcement and establish a private right to action; as well as, 2) ensure new airplanes are designed to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities by requiring airlines to meet defined accessibility standards. These standards will ensure safe and effective boarding and deplaning, visually accessible announcements, seating accommodations, restrooms, and better stowage options for assistive devices. They would also require the removal of access barriers on existing airplanes to the extent that it is readily achievable and may be done without much difficulty or expense.

We shared experiences of PVA members being injured while boarding planes, of wheelchairs being damaged while stored, and of airline staff not being properly trained to understand the difficulties that a wheelchair-bound person experiences while flying. The personal stories seemed to really resonate with congressional staff, and we hope that our conversations will translate into more members of our New England Congressional Delegation cosponsoring this important piece of



legislation.

Current New England Congressional Delegation Cosponsors of the ACAA: Congressman Pingree; Congressman Pappas; Congresswoman Pressley; Congressman Larson; Senator Blumenthal; Senator Markey; Senator Hassan; and Senator Whitehouse.

Improve Access to Fertility Services Through VA

We asked the New England Congressional Delegation to repeal VA’s ban on in-vitro fertilization (IVF) and make these services a regular part of the medical benefits package available to veterans by passing the Veteran Families Health Services Act. We are asking Congress to specifically pass legislation to authorize VA to provide assisted reproductive technology, including IVF, surrogacy, and gamete donation at VA for any veterans enrolled in VA health care who are living with infertility, including the authorization of service provision to non-veteran partners.

We echoed the belief that our country has a moral obligation to restore what has been lost to our service men and women. We reminded congressional staff that our members served this nation well, many sustaining life-changing injuries while doing so, and they deserve the chance to start a family. If you have experienced infertility as a result of your injury, and would be willing to discuss this issue with me either privately or in a meeting with your Representative, please contact me at kristen@newenglandpva.org.

Current New England Congressional Delegation Cosponsors of the Veteran Families Health Services Act: Senator Warren; Senator Markey; Senator Sanders; Senator Blumenthal; Senator Shaheen; Senator Hassan; Senator Whitehouse; Congressman McGovern; Congresswoman Hayes; Congressman Moulton; Congressman Auchincloss; Congresswoman Trahan; Congresswoman Pressley; Congressman Himes; Congresswoman Kuster; and Congressman Larson.

Strengthen and Enhance Social Security for People with Disabilities

More than 9 million veterans and their families receive retirement, disability or survivor benefits from Social Security and, together, they comprise approximately 35 percent of the Social Security beneficiary population.

We asked Members of Congress to cosponsor and favorably vote for the Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust Act. This legislation would strengthen and enhance Social Security benefits by ending the five-month wait for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); eliminate the SSDI “cash cliff,” which hinders the ability of beneficiaries to return to work; provide

credits under Social Security to ensure that caregivers are not penalized in retirement for leaving the workforce to provide care for children or other dependents; and make other needed improvements and reforms.

Current New England Congressional Delegation Cosponsors to Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust: Senator Blumenthal (lead Senate sponsor); Senator Whitehouse; Congressman Larson (lead House sponsor); Congressman Neal; Congresswoman DeLauro; Congressman Courtney; Congressman Himes; Congresswoman Hayes; Congressman Auchincloss; Congressman Cicilline; Congresswoman Clark; Congressman Keating; Congresswoman Kuster; Congressman Langevin; Congressman Lynch; Congressman McGovern; Congressman Moulton; Congresswoman Pingree; Congresswoman Pressley; Congresswoman Trahan; and, Congressman Welch.

Improve Access to Health Care for Women Veterans

Women veterans and women in uniform are more likely to receive a breast cancer diagnosis than their civilian counterparts but yet mammography services whether in VA or the community are still often not fully accessible for wheelchair users.

We asked Members to cosponsor the Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans Act which would improve access to breast imaging services for veterans. The bill would also mandate a study on the accessibility of mammography services within VA and require VA to update its policies and directives for community care, ensuring that external sites are accessible and are informed on best practices for screening paralyzed and disabled veterans. If you have faced hurdles in accessing mammography screenings, please consider reaching out to me to share your story.



Current New England Congressional Delegation Cosponsors to the Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans Act: Senator Collins; Congresswoman Pressley; and, Congressman Keating.

How you can help our advocacy efforts

All of the information you need to respond and take action on any of PVA’s legislative priorities, including those listed above, is available here: <https://www.votevoice.net/PVA/campaigns/78011/respond>. Please take a moment to fill in your information so an automated email in support of these issues will be sent directly to your Representatives in Congress.



COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

In January, Pittsburgh VA opened a clinic for Veterans who have recovered from the acute stage of COVID but who continue to have debilitating symptoms of the disease.

Ten to 30 percent of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 report new, returning or worsened symptoms known as post-COVID conditions, according to team member Dr. Erika Hoffman. The broad range of lingering symptoms includes sleep loss, heart and lung issues and trouble with mental processes such as thinking, learning, problem-solving and memory.

“Many have multifaceted health issues and worsened quality of life,” said Hoffman.

Each Veteran gets personalized treatment program

Some Veterans have rare symptoms, such as hair loss and profound fatigue after minimal mental or physical effort, said team member Dr. Anjali Das. Because no two patients present the same symptoms of post-COVID, the team provides each Veteran with a personalized treatment program and three-month follow-up.

The clinic’s multidisciplinary team includes physicians, psychologists, nurses, physical therapists, social workers, researchers, and hearing and speech specialists. They take a team approach to treating Veterans, addressing psychological, physical and mental health needs.

Psychologist Austin Brown assesses Veterans for mental health and cognitive symptoms that can overlap and contribute to long-term

Treating Veterans with lingering “Long COVID”

via VAntage Point by Keith Gottschalk is a public affairs specialist for the Pittsburgh VA

While everyone is looking forward to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pittsburgh VA clinicians have their eye on a long-term issue with the disease – a health condition known as “long COVID.”

recovery. Many Veterans with post-COVID conditions need help with the depression, fear, anxiety and even weight gain that can come with a long-term, debilitating illness.

“This assessment helps to ensure that every aspect of the Veteran’s well-being is considered in the treatment recommendations created by the team,” said Brown.

Physical therapy’s role includes helping Veterans who have lung damage from COVID. They can instruct Veterans who are easily winded, for instance, on therapeutic exercises to perform at home.

Social workers help Veterans identify stressors and challenges. They also help Veterans find VA and community resources to help them deal not only with their symptoms, but also with financial concerns, housing and food insecurity.

Many patients did not get or complete vaccinations

Das said the clinic will remain if there is a need but she reiterated the best way to prevent post-COVID conditions is to prevent COVID-19 illness in the first place.

“Many of the patients we have seen did not get or complete their series of COVID vaccinations,” she said.

In addition to clinical care, the team is gathering information on post-COVID conditions for research.

“We plan to create a registry and data repository that will provide a mechanism to store data, support the conduct of future research about long COVID, and foster collaborations with both VA and non-VA facilities, such as the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center,” said team member Dr. Lynn Baniak, associate chief nurse for research.

To be seen in the clinic, Veterans should ask their primary care provider for a referral.



VA Access, Supplies, Quality Standards?

By Pete Demarkis, PVA Sr. National Service Officer, Boston, MA

PVA’s Government Relations Department needs your assistance with gauging how the VA is doing regarding the Access and Quality Standards VA established in 2019.

VA published the following access standards:

1. For primary care, mental health, and non-institutional extended care services, 30-minute average drive time standard.
2. For specialty care, 60-minute average drive time standard.

3. Appointment wait-time standards of 20 days for primary care, mental health care, and non-institutional extended care services, and 28 days for specialty care from the date of request with certain exception

In addition to this, PVA would also like to know if any members have experienced difficulties in receiving any medical supplies, such as gloves, catheters, or any medications from the pharmacy.

Knowing these access standards and supply concerns, please let your covering PVA Service Officer know if you’ve experienced any issues or delays with the VA providing access to these services or supplies. You can find a list of Service Officers covering New England and New York on [page 3](#).



Veterans Career Program

Career Support for ALL Veterans

With Paralyzed Veterans of America's Veterans Career Program,

You Will:

- Receive carefully tailored **one-on-one support** from a career expert team member.
- Set goals to achieve your career objective.
- Learn how to craft an effective resume and cover letter specific to your career interests.
- Develop effective interview and communication skills so you are confident in interviews.
- Craft job search strategies to meet your employment goals.
- Create an effective LinkedIn profile.
- Identify and engage in networking opportunities.
- Build confidence in your career pursuits.
- And much more!



We Will:

- Provide one-on-one guidance to help you find **meaningful employment, education and volunteer opportunities**.
- Assess your current abilities, training, and experience and help you identify career goals.
- Guide you through development and enhancement of your resume and cover letter.
- Teach you how to build an effective LinkedIn profile page.
- 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.

PVA.org/VeteransCareerProgram • VeteransCareerProgram@PVA.org • [f](#) ParalyzedVeterans • [t](#) [i](#) [v](#) PVA1946

PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

PVA Washington Update Volume 30 Issue 5

PVA National President Charles Brown Testifies Before Congress

On March 8, PVA National President Charles Brown testified before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees to present PVA's 2022 legislative priorities. In his statement to the Committees, President Brown focused on three critically important issues that Congress must address for catastrophically disabled veterans: 1) improved access to specialty systems of care, 2) expanded access to

home and community-based services, and 3) increased access to benefits that promote the health, safety, and independence of catastrophically disabled veterans. To view the hearing, click [here](#). To read President Brown's full written statement, click [here](#).

VA Releases AIR Recommendations

On March 14, VA released its recommendations to the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission to modernize and realign the VA health care system. The AIR Commission was authorized by the VA MISSION Act, which was signed into law in 2018. PVA National President Charles Brown released a [statement](#) noting our "grave concerns" with VA's recommendations that some of VA's spinal cord injury and disorder (SCI/D) system of care centers be closed or consolidated. Mr. Brown further stated that, "We need to understand the data providing the justification for these recommendations as there are many unmet specialized needs for veterans with SCI/D, particularly inpatient long-term care."

Although VA's recommendations have been released, the AIR Commission has not yet been confirmed by the Senate. Earlier in March, President Biden announced his nomination of PVA Executive Director Carl Blake to the Commission. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee will be holding

a confirmation hearing for nominees in the coming weeks.

Once the AIR Commission members have been confirmed, they will review VA's recommendations. As part of the review process, the Commission will hold public hearings, visit VA facilities, meet with employees and VA partners – and, most important, listen to veterans – to help them assess VA's recommendations. The Commission will then forward their recommendations, with any changes deemed necessary, to the President, who will determine whether or not to submit those recommendations to Congress. If the President submits them, Congress can then accept those recommendations by inaction or reject them by passing a joint resolution of disapproval. If approved, VA must begin implementing them within three years.

Congress Resolves FY 2022 Funding

President Biden has signed a \$1.5 trillion omnibus spending bill that provides a substantial increase in VA funding for fiscal year (FY) 2022. The bill provides VA with \$112.6 billion in discretionary spending and \$157 billion in mandatory spending. Also, it provides advanced appropriations for FY 2023, including \$111.3 billion for veterans medical care and \$161 billion for veterans benefits. Specific provisions in the bill provide:

- \$97.5 billion for VA medical care including:
 - \$13.2 billion for mental health;
 - \$2.2 billion for veteran homelessness prevention;
 - \$1.4 billion for the caregivers program;
 - \$840 million for women's health; and
 - \$327 million for rural health.
- \$5.5 billion for information technology systems;
- \$3.5 billion for Veterans Benefits Administration operating expenses and claims processors;
- \$2.2 billion for VA infrastructure;
- \$882 million for medical and prosthetics research, including in

areas such as toxic exposures, traumatic brain injury, and precision oncology;

- \$239 million for VA's Office of Inspector General to conduct ongoing oversight and investigations of waste, fraud, and abuse; and
- \$125 million for the Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) pilot program, which provides tuition and housing assistance to veterans in high-tech, high demand career training.

In addition, the language of H.R. 5575, the VA Nurse and Physician Assistant RAISE Act was included in the omnibus package. This bill increases the pay cap on salaries for nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, and physician assistants employed by VA which will help the department attract and retain top health care talent to ensure veterans receive timely, high-quality care. Passage of this legislation was one of PVA's top priorities for 2022, and it is an important element of a 10-part human infrastructure plan VA released last month.

A detailed summary of the FY 2022 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill is available [here](#).

House Passes Honoring our PACT Act

On March 3, the House voted to pass the [Honoring our PACT Act](#) (H.R. 3967) by a vote of 256-174. The PACT Act is comprehensive legislation addressing health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances in service. The day before passage of this landmark legislation, Associate Legislative Director Roscoe Butler attended a press conference on Capitol Hill in support of the measure. House Committee

on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA), Speaker Nancy Pelosi, other members of Congress, Jon Stewart, and leaders of major veterans service organizations also participated in the event.

Killeen Hotel to Pay Damages to Disabled Veteran with Service Dog for Denying Access

U.S. Attorney Ashley C. Hoff of the Western District of Texas announced that the United States has reached an agreement with the owners and managers of Executive Inn & Suites, a hotel in Killeen, Texas, to resolve allegations they violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by denying equal access to individuals with disabilities who use service dogs.

The settlement resolves allegations initially brought by a disabled veteran who utilizes a service animal and wheelchair due to an amputation of his left leg. The veteran alleged that upon learning that the veteran was accompanied by a service dog the hotel desk clerk refused to honor his reservation because the hotel owner did not allow any type of dog. Hotel staff insisted that the veteran leave, called the local police department

to escort the veteran off hotel property, and refused to refund his room rental fee.

Under the agreement, J&J Executive Suites LLC, Kyung Sang Lee and Gaesun Lee will ensure that the hotel adopts and implements a service dog policy; provides training on the service dog policy to employees and managers; and posts the service dog policy at their facilities and in their advertising. They will also pay money damages to the veteran as compensation for the effects of the discrimination and the harm he endured as a result of their actions.

Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics 2021

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has released "[Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics 2021](#)." This report reflects data collected as part of the Current Population Survey, a monthly sample survey that provides statistics on employment and unemployment in the United States. The report shows that in 2021, 19.1 percent of persons with a

disability were employed, while the unemployment rate was 10.1 percent. It also includes charts on the employment status of persons with and without a disability by various characteristics.



Single sign-in eases Veteran access to VA websites

VA's Office of Information and Technology (OIT), Washington, DC.



It's now easier for Veterans to log in to access VA benefits and services with the expansion of the unified sign-in experience.

[My HealthVet](#) is joining VA.gov and My VA Health in offering

a consistent sign-in experience, which also adds a layer of security. (My VA Health is only for Veterans in Spokane and other sites where the new electronic health record system has already been deployed.)

The single login page looks and feels the same no matter which VA website you choose as a starting point. When you log in, you'll be able to move between VA websites seamlessly rather than logging in at each stop or remembering multiple usernames and passwords.

If you've already created an online VA.gov account, congratulations – you're good to go! If you don't have an account, it's easy to get started.

Set up your secure VA single sign-in account by completing these steps:

1. Visit [gov/sign-in](#).
2. Create an account if you don't already have one, or simply sign in with your existing account.

3. Verify your identity information. Choose an identity proofing method that works for you.
4. Confirm your contact information. VA sign-in accounts must contain an email address.
5. Set up multifactor authentication for added security. Choose a multifactor authentication method that works best for you and select a different method at each login if desired.

Note: Multifactor authentication is an additional step in the sign-in process to verify your identity. You can skip this step for now, and it is not required. However, you'll be asked to set it up each time you sign in, as some VA services require multifactor authentication. Watch this short video to learn more and why it's helpful to you.

VA is committed to providing Veterans with an exceptional customer experience, and single sign-in will help drive a seamless experience across VA websites.

If you experience any problems getting logged in, help and additional information is available on the [VA.gov/sign-in](#) page.

VA releases Asset and Infrastructure Review report

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs released its Asset and Infrastructure Review report, March 14, that includes recommendations by the VA Secretary to cement the department as the primary, world-class provider and coordinator of Veterans health care for generations to come.

The VA MISSION Act requires Secretary McDonough to publish the AIR report in the Federal Register and submit it to Congress and a presidentially appointed AIR Commission.

The AIR Commission will conduct public hearings as part of its review of VA's recommendations before submitting its own recommendations to the president for further review in 2023.

The report's release marks the beginning of an in-depth deliberative process. The AIR report is the result of years of research and analysis intended to help VA build a health care network with the right facilities, in the right places, to provide the right care for all Veterans, including underserved and at-risk Veteran populations in every part of the country — making sure our facilities and services are accessible to Veterans in their communities.

The recommendations center around improving access to and quality of care for Veterans by ensuring the department's infrastructure in the decades ahead reflects Veterans' needs and 21st century design standards. VA is investing heavily in its number one asset — its employees,

strengthening its public/private strategic partnerships and elevating its role as the leading health care research entity and the leading health care workforce training institution in the country.

"VA came to these recommendations by asking ourselves one question above all else: what's best for the Veterans we serve? Because that is our number one goal, today and every day. That's what our Asset and Infrastructure Review recommendations are all about," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "We've spent the last several weeks and months communicating about this with VA employees, union partners, state partners, Veteran service organizations, Congress, and more. I'm continuing to consult with our unions, and will do so moving forward, because I so appreciate the strong partnership we have with them."

Visit [AIR Commission report](#) for more information. View the [Federal Register notice](#).

Eligible Veterans can shop at Defense commissaries

via VAntage Point by Courtney Rogers serves as the Defense Commissary Agency's Consumer Advocate



In 2020, commissary shopping benefits expanded to include more Veterans, as the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018 (part of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019) authorized the Department of Defense to expand access to commissary [shopping privileges](#) to additional valued members of the military community.

Expanding privileges

The law, which took effect January 1, 2020, extends commissary shopping privileges to:

- Veterans with any VA-documented service-connected disabilities;
- Purple Heart recipients;
- Former prisoners of war; and
- Individuals assessed, approved and designated as primary family caregivers to eligible Veterans under VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

Veterans and designated caregivers are encouraged to check their commissary privilege qualifications.

Obtaining the proper identification

Obtain a Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) and ensure it reflects eligibility through one of the required designations: SERVICE CONNECTED, MEDAL OF HONOR, PURPLE HEART or FORMER POW. The card and designation will be required during the commissary check-out process.

Find out more about how to obtain a VHIC [here](#).

Checking installation access policies

Contact the commissary's installation and ask about current installation access policies.

Checking for "user" fees before paying

The law expanding commissary access also requires charging user fees when shoppers pay for purchases with commercial credit or debit cards. This fee imposes an additional 1.9% for credit cards and 0.5% for debit cards with a PIN. (The 1.9% fee also applies when using a signature debit card, because it is processed as a credit card transaction.)

Shoppers will not be subject to user fees if paying with the MILITARY STAR® card, cash or EBT. Learn more about the MILITARY STAR® card [here](#).

Enjoying commissary benefits, value

Commissaries serve shoppers who have served our Nation by selling groceries and household products to authorized customers at a substantial cost savings. Commissary benefits include:

- A shopping environment exclusively serving the military community with a workforce that understands shopper needs.
- Prices saving customers thousands of dollars per year, on average, when compared to commercial store prices.
- [Commissary Store Brands](#) offering quality products on par with national brands and even greater savings.
- Convenience of using CLICK2GO for online shopping and curbside pickup.
- Additional savings through digital coupons and promotional sales flyers.

The commissary is here to serve those who have served our Nation. For more information, visit Your Commissary.

Veteran communities receive latest resources for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis

VA's Office of Information and Technology (OIT), Washington, DC.



WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs encourages Veterans affected by inflammatory bowel diseases to access a new [website](#) that raises awareness

of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Veterans can use the site to get step-by-step instructions to access treatment and links to VA resources — connecting with online communities and peer to peer support to improve their quality of life.

"A [2020 study of VA data](#) found that rates of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder increased among Veterans diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease over time," said [National Center for](#)

[Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships](#) Nurse Executive Tracy L. Weistreich, Ph.D. "It's important we find ways to assist our Veterans with all issues relevant to this chronic condition, especially Veterans who may not be receiving care through VA."

Through this partnership, the [Crohn's & Colitis Foundation](#) will provide educational materials and share resources widely with VA staff, Veterans and the public to increase knowledge about inflammatory bowel diseases and treatment options. VA will train the Foundation on Veteran-specific concerns like suicide prevention and share free resources such as the [Veterans Crisis Line](#).

[Learn more](#) about this and other partnerships facilitated by HAP.



ANNUAL AIR RIFLE & AIR PISTOL PROGRAM

Cal-Diego Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

December 3, 2021
Camp Pendleton
Camp Pendleton, CA

Wisconsin Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

March 11-12, 2022
Milwaukee Tech Area College
Milwaukee, WI

Buckeye Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament *

May 9-19, 2022
**Virtual Buckeye Wheelchair Games*

PVA BOATING/FISHING TOUR

Mid-America Bass Tournament

September 10-12, 2021
Lake Eufaula
Eufaula, OK

Vaughan Bass Tournament

October 8-10, 2021
The Lakes of Egypt
Marion, IL

Southeastern Bass Tournament

October 15-17, 2021
Thurmond/Clarks Hill Lake
Evans, GA

Florida Gulf Coast Bass Tournament

April 1-3, 2022
Lake Toho
Kissimmee, FL

Kentucky-Indiana Bass Tournament

April 22-24, 2022
Lake Barkley
Kuttawa, KY

Mid-Atlantic Bass Tournament

June 10-12, 2022
James & Appomattox Rivers
Hopewell, VA

Capital Clash Bass Tournament

June 17-19, 2022
Potomac River
Waldorf, MD

ANNUAL PVA/NWPA BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT SERIES

Buckeye Billiards Tournament

July 17-18, 2021
8 Ball Sports Bar & Billiards
Columbus, OH

Mid-South Billiards Tournament

October 15-16, 2021
Clicks Billiards
Memphis, TN

Mid-Atlantic Billiards Tournament

March 18-20, 2022
Diamond Billiards
Midlothian, VA

ANNUAL PVA/AWBA BOWLING TOURNAMENT SERIES

Great Plains Bowling Tournament

July 29-August 1, 2021
Thunderbowl
Council Bluffs, IA

Mid-Atlantic Bowling Tournament

September 24-26, 2021
Bowl America
Midlothian, VA

Florida Gulf Coast Bowling Tourn.

February 23-25, 2022
Pin Chasers
Tampa, FL

Vaughan Bowling Tournament

April 29-May 1, 2022
Bowlero
Romeoville, IL

PVA NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS CIRCUIT

North Central Trapshoot

September 11-12, 2021
Crooks Gun Club
Sioux Falls, SD

Cal-Diego Trapshoot

March 25-27, 2022
Redlands Shooting Park
Redlands, CA

Nevada Trapshoot

April 1-3, 2022
Clark County Shooting Park
Las Vegas, NV

Florida Gulf Coast Trapshoot

May 13-15, 2022
Silver Dollar Trap Club
Odessa, FL

Vaughan Trapshoot

June 3-5, 2022
St. Charles Sportsmen's Club
Elburn, IL

Wisconsin Trapshoot

June 10-12, 2022
Brown County Sportsman Club
Green Bay, WI

Iowa Shooting Trapshoot *

June 17-19, 2022
Otter Creek Sportsman Club
Cedar Rapids, IA
**Year-End Tournament*

BOCCIA

KY-IN Boccia Tournament

July 17-18, 2021
Indianapolis, IN

KY-IN Boccia Tournament

September 25-26, 2021
Bowling Green, KY

Bayou Boccia Tournament

February 18-19, 2022
Gulfport, MS

Buckeye Boccia Tournament *

May 9-19, 2022
**Virtual Buckeye Wheelchair Games*

Mid-Atlantic Boccia Tournament

May 2022 (Dates TBD)
Richmond, VA

Vaughan Boccia Tournament

June 11-12, 2022
Glen Ellyn, IL

HANDCYCLING

Echelon Racing League ToAD Virtual Criterium Races

November 2021 -February 2022

PVAR High Performance Camp

January 29 - February 3, 2022
Brooksville, FL

Swamp Classic

February 5-6, 2022
Gainesville, FL

Valley of the Sun

February 18-20, 2022
Phoenix, AZ

US Paracycling Open

April 13-10, 2022
Huntsville, AL

Off-Road Spring Expo

April 13-16, 2022
Chesterfield, VA

Redlands Cycling Classic

April 20-24, 2022
Redlands, CA

Pittsburgh Marathon

May 1, 2022
Pittsburgh, PA

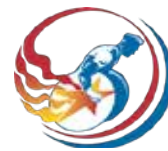
Tour of America's Dairylands

June 16-20, 2022
Milwaukee, WI

Wichita Omnium

Dates TBD
Wichita, KS

NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES



July 7-12, 2022
Tempe, AZ



MARCH CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Daniel P Ouellette	Gary A Jones	Richard J Vieira	Christopher A Carroll
Thomas M Conrad	Lawrence B Harris	Frank P Creane	Arthur J Harrington
Kenneth W Stidsen	Robert J Mazarella	Scott T Horton	Leo J Fitzgerald
John B Swinerton	Michael J Pelletier	Lawrence A Lavelle	David J Groskopf
Max A Tait	Roger V Sala	Leo A Balzano	Bob J Barlow
Michael P Clancy	Paul A Willey	David C Anthony	John K Ross
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William J Sullivan	Jerome T Lindabury	Winslow M Martson	Maceo E Early
Davide T Wiggan	Robert A Strickland	Arron R Frankum	John D Osterlitz
Paul D Kenney	Terry W Robbins	Stephen K Valyou	
Jaclynn A Coppola	Lois E Fortin	Theresa M Farrell-Young	
Russell R Tanguay	Dwayne A Paige	Edward H Thibault	
Patrick L Dostie	Timothy S Warn	James P Tabares	



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Indego® Gets Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again

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- ✓ Enjoy eye-level conversations
- ✓ Improve your cardio & bone density



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Phone: 844-846-3346
Email: support.indego@parker.com

