

## NEPVA is Going to the Games

by Brad Carlson, President NEPVA

Each year, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) brings together hundreds of veterans from across the United States for a week of competition, camaraderie, and empowerment. This event, co-presented by the VA and PVA, not only showcases the athletic abilities of disabled veterans, but it also serves as a powerful testament to the resilience, determination, and steadfast spirit of those who have served our country. For my article this month, I would like to reflect on the impact of the Games as we look forward to attending it at the end of this month in New Orleans.

The NVWG traces its origins back to 1981 when a small group of disabled veterans gathered in Richmond, Virginia, to participate in a friendly competition organized by the VA and PVA. Since then, the event has grown exponentially, attracting athletes of all ages and abilities to compete in a wide range of adaptive sports, including basketball, swimming, track and field, and billiards (among others). But the Games are much more than just a sporting event. For many of our Chapter members, it is a lifeline, providing them with a sense of purpose, belonging, and community in the face of adversity. For those who may be newly injured or struggling to adapt to life with a disability,

the Games offer hope and a reminder that life goes on and that there are endless possibilities for achievement and fulfillment.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Games is the transformative impact they have on the lives of the partici-

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***“The NVWG isn’t just about winning medals - it’s about reclaiming our lives and proving to ourselves and the world that we are capable of anything we set our minds to.”***

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pants. For many veterans, the Games serve as a catalyst for physical and emotional healing, helping them overcome the physical and psychological challenges associated with their injuries. Through the camaraderie and support of their fellow athletes, they find the strength and courage to push themselves beyond their limits and achieve things they never thought possible. The NVWG is a powerful platform for raising awareness about the needs and capabilities of disabled

*continued on page 5*

## Join Us Outside this Summer

**VA Summer Sports Clinic**  
July 22-26, Rhode Island

**NEPVA Chapter Golf Tournament**  
August 19, Hingham, MA

**Chapter Membership Picnic**  
September 8, Marlboro, MA



Mike Guilbault competing in the obstacle course at Vet Games.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**NEPVA**  
**Chapter Golf Tournament**  
**August 19**  
**South Shore Country Club**  
**Hingham, MA**



**Scan the QR below  
to register and find  
out more about the  
NEPVA Charity Golf  
Tournament**



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**Executive Director's Report**

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

*Dear Friends,*

**A**s was announced in last month's newsletter, the PVA Medical Services team conducted a site survey at the West Roxbury and Brockton VA facilities from July 9-11th. In preparation for this important visit, we held a virtual Chapter Town Hall event on July 11th, where we had the opportunity to share with PVA our Chapter's and member's successes and challenges navigating the VA system locally here in Boston. Thank you to everyone who attended the Town Hall as the feedback was enormously successful to PVA in their preparations. A very special thank you to everyone who participated in the on-site survey as well, including Board members Brad Carlson and Gary Jezierski. I am happy to share that the survey was enormously successful.

On June 17th I was honored to play in and support the Italian American War Veterans (ITAM) Post 45's Annual Golf Tournament at Juniper Hill Golf Course in Northborough, MA. We had a wonderful day, where we had a foursome playing in the tournament and we sponsored a hole as well. As fellow Veteran Service Organizations, we have a fantastic working relationship with our friends at ITAM, and they also support our Annual Golf Tournament as well. Following golf, we went over to their Post in Marlborough where we had a great lunch and time for fellowship among the tournament attendees. We look forward to hosting our Annual Membership gathering there in September.

I am happy to share that our Chapter fundraising work continues to expand and grow. We recently were awarded grants through The Boston Foundation and Dedham Savings Bank Foundation. Our Chapter grows through the generosity of our donors and grantors, and we are especially thankful to The Boston Foundation and Dedham Savings Bank for their incredible and recent support.

At the end of this month, I will be attending the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New Orleans, Louisiana, along with 30 other members, volunteers, caregivers, and VA staff from our Chapter. This will be my first time attending the Games, and I am excited to experience all that I have heard about this amazing week. The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is of course the world's largest annual wheelchair sports and rehabilitation event solely for military veterans, and it powerfully shows the persistent character of veterans while also bringing about a wider respect for all people with disabilities. I look forward to reporting back next month on how the week goes in New Orleans.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy  
Executive Director



*Our Chapter grows  
through the generosity  
of our donors and  
grantors, and we are  
especially thankful to  
The Boston Foundation  
and Dedham Savings  
Bank for their  
incredible and recent  
support.*



NEPVA Members invited to participate in a documentary on the 2024 election

The National Disability Rights Network, a leading national disability rights organization, is working on a documentary short that will tell the stories of voters with disabilities in the lead up to the 2024 presidential election. We will be doing interviews in Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Virginia and the District of Columbia. We want to capture the issues that motivate voters with disabilities and paint a rich picture of their lives, because our community, despite being over 25% of the American population it's often ignored by politicians.

We are seeking to get a look at the home life and day-to-day of voters with disabilities so we can connect the political issues that matter to their daily life. Interviews would take approximately two to three hours. We want to conduct the interview and film footage to complement it. For example: navigating to work, arranging paratransit, going over how much their healthcare costs or showing any durable medical equipment they use, explaining how a home health aide would enable them to experience greater independence.

The goal of this project is to highlight the biggest minority group that often gets ignored by the candidates of all parties. The project is strictly nonpartisan. We are seeking to ensure we have a diverse range of perspectives included in terms of the issues that matter and the life experience those voters come with.

We want to capture the issues that motivate voters with disabilities and paint a rich picture of their lives...

We are looking to speak to first time and longtime voters, we want to interview those fresh out of school (and even graduating seniors) as well as people who have spent a long time in the workforce or even found themselves excluded from the workforce. We want to speak to voters with disabilities of all stripes and capture the diversity of our community.

If you are interested, please contact us at [storytelling@ndrn.org](mailto:storytelling@ndrn.org). We look forward to working with you to help politicians understand that our community cannot be ignored any longer. Please note that, following documentary film making best practices, we are unable to pay interview participants.

<https://www.ndrn.org/issues/veterans/>



2024 PVA Priorities

Protect Access to VA's Specialized Health Care Services

Expand Access to VA Long-Term Services and Supports and their Survivors

Improve VA Benefits and Health Care Services for Paralyzed Veterans and their Survivors

Protect the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities

Improve Access to Social Security Benefits

Increase Employment Prospects for Veterans with Disabilities

From the President's Desk

continued from page 1

veterans. By showcasing the talents and achievements of these remarkable individuals, the Games challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about disabilities and they inspire others to see the potential in every person, regardless of their physical limitations. Many of the athletes go on to become advocates for adaptive sports and disability rights, using their experiences to inspire and empower others to embrace their abilities and pursue their dreams.

As we go to the NVWG in New Orleans very soon, it is my hope that we will never forget the impact that this event has had on the lives of countless disabled veterans. Through the power of sport, camaraderie, and shared purpose, the Games continue to be an example of the resilience and strength of the human spirit. As a friend recently shared with me, "The NVWG isn't just about winning medals - it's

about reclaiming our lives and proving to ourselves and the world that we are capable of anything we set our minds to." Indeed, the NVWG is a testament to the courage, determination, and tenacity of our nation's veterans, and it is an honor to celebrate their achievements each year on this remarkable stage.

With gratitude,

Brad Carlson  
Chapter President and National Director



We had a great time last summer! We hope you will join us again.



2024 PVA New England Annual Membership Gathering

Get ready for an afternoon of great food and camaraderie at the 2024 PVA New England Annual Membership Gathering! Last year's event was such a success, we decided to do it again. Join us for a casual afternoon of chowder, steak, lobster, chicken and all the accompaniments! Free for Chapter Members and one guest, VA Staff and Volunteers. There will be a DJ, 50/50 raffle, cash bar and lots of fun. Hope to see you there! Sign up for tickets below by scanning the QR code below!

Sunday, September 8, Noon to 4pm

111 Neil Street  
Marlborough, MA 01752  
Italian American War Veterans (Post 45)  
Marlborough, Massachusetts



scan the QR code to signup



Government Relations Report

Dear NEPVA Members,

**I** write this month with an urgent plea from our National Office: **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** On May 14, House and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs leaders Chairman Mike Bost (R-IL), Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT), and Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-KS) announced the introduction of H.R. 8371, The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act. This legislation is a comprehensive bipartisan package of bills that expands services for veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors across healthcare, education, benefits, and more.

Provisions addressing PVA's most important legislative goals, like eliminating the cap on how much VA can pay for home care and expanding the Veteran Directed Care program, are in the bill. It would immediately save and improve lives.

Every major veterans service organization supports the passage of this bill. However, it is entangled in a political struggle that has prevented it from being brought to the House floor for a vote.

**Tell your representative that veterans can't wait, and to bring the bill to the floor for a vote immediately!**

Click the link below or scan the QR code to log in and send your message: <https://www.votervoice.net/BroadcastLinks/SwK5rLHjOqvHZiixj0M-wow>

**A**s you know, this legislation has been a priority of our Chapter for several years. Please help us get this bill over the finish line to ensure caregivers get the support they deserve!

Women Veteran Roundtable

At the end of June, PVA joined other veterans service organizations (VSO) and members of Congress to discuss women veterans. Several years ago, the Deborah Sampson Act (P.L. 116-315) passed, which expanded care and resources for women veterans using the VA, as well as requiring several congressionally mandated reports (CMR) to assess the impact of the legislation. The focus of this meeting was to discuss data provided by CMRs related to sexual assault and harassment on VA campuses. Over the past few years, reports of assault and harassment have been on the rise. VSOs and Congress are working on strategies and solutions to improve the experience for women veterans at VA while engaging with VA staff to improve intervention and bystander training to ensure that women veterans can use VA services free from harassment.

Kristen McCone Gordon  
Director of Government and Community Affairs



**I also want share an opportunity to learn more about the basics of advocacy and how you can get involved.**

National PVA is hosting a webinar on July 23rd at 3 PM (ET) focused on administrative advocacy through the discussion of regulations. "Protecting Disability Rights through Regulation" will cover ways to use administrative advocacy when it comes to the federal rule making process and how groups and individuals can participate. The webinar will highlight how PVA has successfully used this process for disability rights advocacy. Register for the webinar [here](#). I plan to attend and hope to see you there!

With gratitude for your service,  
Kristen

**Scan the QR code and tell your representative that veterans**



**can't wait, and to bring the bill to the floor for a vote immediately!**

NEPVA's  
Veterans with MS Program

BUILDING COMMUNITY  
INFORMATION SHARING

Dear Members of the NEPVA Veterans with MS program,

**I**'m happy to share the latest newsletter from the National PVA MS Committee. I hope you find this information as helpful as I have. If you haven't already signed up to receive these newsletters directly to your inbox, please take a moment and do it here: <https://pva.org/research-resources/publication/ms-newsletter/>. I'm consistently impressed with the information our colleagues at National include in each edition and encourage all of you to take advantage of all the opportunities they offer.

I'm also happy to report that our "Ask a Social Worker!" Zoom has been rescheduled for September 24th at noon. I highly encourage your participation in what will be a very informative and relaxed event. I will be joined by Michelle Turcotte-Smail, LICSW Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders Clinic and Polytrauma Clinic Social Work Coordinator at the White River Junction VA Medical Center and Cristina Bird-sall, LICSW Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders Clinical Coordina-

tor at VA Connecticut Healthcare. Michelle and Tina are a both a wealth of knowledge and this promises to be a very informative discussion.

Please consider zooming in and hearing about benefits you may be eligible for through your local VA. Here is the zoom link for the event: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83650458384?pwd=bOi4V2A0LG0xJiBPU7IX7bhG9LWaNK1>. We'll be sharing this via email and Facebook (be sure to follow us if you don't already!) as well.

I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful 4th of July and I look forward to seeing you in the fall!

Sincerely,  
Chuck Houle  
Chapter MS Liaison



Scan the QR for MS Newsletter

Veterans Advocates  
Continue to Push for Senator Elizabeth Dole Omnibus Legislation

Action on H.R. 8371, the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, continues to be delayed due to election year politics and concerns about community care provisions in the bill. H.R. 8371 combines several bipartisan and bicameral proposals to reform and improve the delivery of healthcare, benefits, and services at the VA for veterans, their families, and survivors into a single package. Provisions in H.R. 8371 would expand economic opportunities for veterans, improve mental health care access, and facilitate better oversight of the VA by Congress. Most importantly, the bill includes the entire Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act, which would expand overall access to VA home

and community-based services and remove the cap on how much VA can spend on home care for veterans, a specific concern for those with catastrophically disabilities. On June 25, Senator Elizabeth Dole, PVA CEO Carl Blake, and representatives for other veterans advocacy organizations held a press conference calling on the House of Representatives to pass the bill without further delay. Later in the week, CEO Blake and leaders of other veterans service organizations (VSO) met with House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mark Takano (D-CA) regarding his concerns about H.R. 8371, specifically, what he and other members of his caucus believe are efforts to expand community

care access. VSO leaders reiterated their strong, united support of the bill and their position that it does not significantly expand access to such care. They also noted the human toll of not acting on veterans who need the help the bill's provisions will provide now. Veterans advocates continue to meet with key House leaders as we seek to find a path forward for H.R. 8371 before the August recess. We also need your help in moving this bill forward. Please send a message to your Representative in support of quick passage of this important legislation.



# Sports & Recreation

## Sailing on Lake Champlain with Northeast Disabled Athletic Association

Our adaptive sailing program began in 2006 at The Moorings Marina in Colchester, VT. We purchased two Martin 16 adaptive sailboats with the help of a generous grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation.

A Martin 16 sailboat can carry one sailor and one crew. The boat has been modified to be operated from a seated position. A series of pull ropes enables a sailor to use the rudder and control the lines for the mainsail and the jib.

Our boats can also be controlled with a sip 'n' puff switch, granting sailors with significant mobility or dexterity impairments the chance to captain independently.

Our boats are available for use during sailing season,

which runs on Lake Champlain from late May to late September. **Contact [sailing@disabledathletics.org](mailto:sailing@disabledathletics.org) for more information, or to schedule a sail.**

### NDAAs has organized programs for local athletes in activities including:

- Archery
- Biathlon
- Bocce
- Cross-Country skiing
- Handcycling
- Kayaking
- Power Soccer
- Sailing
- Sled Hockey
- Tennis
- Water Skiing
- Wheelchair Basketball

**Find out more at [www.disabledathletics.org](http://www.disabledathletics.org)**



## ROWING with Holyoke Rows

This program, operated by Holyoke Rows, is free to individuals with people with disabilities and their families. While receiving instruction and the opportunity to practice, rowers also have the chance to participate in competitions! Our program serves people of all capabilities, from beginners to leisure rowers, to competitive racers!

**Connecticut River**  
at 25 Jones Ferry Rd., Holyoke, MA

### Thursdays, by appointment only

- July 25
- August 1
- August 8
- August 15
- August 22

### Free

**To Register: Call Holyoke Rows at (413) 320-3134 or Email [office@holyokerows.org](mailto:office@holyokerows.org)**

## ADAPTIVE WATER SKIING with Northeast Passage

Come experience the freedom of carving across the wakes and catching some big air on NEP's adaptive water skis. Northeast Passage offers adaptive sit down skiing, stand up skiing, and tubing.

### Water Skiing Essential Eligibility Criteria

**To participate in these events, all participants must meet the following criteria:**

- Be able to breathe independently, not require medical devices to sustain breathing.
- Be able to maintain a closed mouth/lips while under water.
- Independently hold head upright without neck/head support.
- Be able to independently turn from face down to face up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted personal flotation device.
- Get out of a capsized waterski independently, when floating in deep water.
- Participants must successfully demonstrate the above criteria through a water test prior to their first ski of the sea son, if they have modified their ski fitting or are trying a new piece of equipment and/or if they have experienced a change in medical status since their previous water test.
- Be able to manage personal care independently, or with the assistance of a companion who accompanies you.

Due to limited capacity and high demand for water skiing opportunities, we are asking participants to register for 2 sessions and wait list for additional dates.

**Choose 1 session time: 4:00-6:00PM OR 6:00-8:00PM. Fee: \$40/session**  
**Merrimac, MA: July 23, August 13, August 20**  
**Barrington, NH: July 30, August 6, August 27**



Summer Sports Clinic is about to begin.

[www.pvanewengland.org](http://www.pvanewengland.org)

## KAYAKING & CANOEING

**Walden Pond State Reservation,**  
**915 Walden St, Concord, MA**  
**Thursdays, 1-3 p.m.**

- July 25
  - August 29
- Tuesdays, 1-3 p.m.**
- August 6
  - August 13
  - August 20
  - August 27

**Kayaking at Hopkinton State Park,**  
**164 Cedar St., Hopkinton**  
**Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m. -3 pm**

- July 23
- July 30
- August 6
- August 13
- August 20
- August 27

**Canoeing and Kayaking at DAR**  
**State Forest, 78 Cape St, Goshen**  
**Wednesdays, 9:45 a.m.-3:15 p.m.**

- July 24
- July 31
- August 7
- August 14
- August 21
- August 28



**Scan the QR code to see all the summer activities offered by Mass Department of Recreation**



Service Officers Report

by Michael Snape,  
Senior National Service Officer

This article reviews/discusses recent changes approved to the character of discharge process which may affect some chapter members. VA looks at the “character of discharge” to determine whether a person meets the basic eligibility requirements for receipt of VA benefits under title 38 of the United States Code. Certain types of discharges, along with the circumstances surrounding those discharges, bar an individual from basic eligibility for VA benefits. Other types of discharges require VA to make a character of discharge determination in order to assess basic eligibility for VA benefits. Types of discharges which require a character of discharge (COD) review for benefits are undesirable discharge, other than honorable (OTH) discharge, bad conduct discharge, void enlistment, and dropped from rolls. A dishonorable discharge deprives a claimant of all VA benefits. A dishonorable discharge is not binding on VA if it is determined that the individual was insane when committing the acts which resulted in the discharge.

On April 26, 2024, the final rule for AQ95, “Update and Clarify Regulatory Bars to Benefits Based on Character of Discharge,” was published in the Federal Register. The changes become effective on June 26, 2024. The new final rule makes changes to both statutory and regulatory bars under 38 CFR 3.12. What changes were made as a result of this regula-

tory change? First, the final rule removed the bar for same sex acts. The bar was considered outdated based on current federal guidelines and was removed completely. The rule also better defined what is considered willful and persistent misconduct as: Instances of misconduct occurring within 2 years of each other considered persistent, instance of minor misconduct within 2 years of serious misconduct considered persistent. Instances of serious misconduct within 5 years of another serious misconduct considered persistent. The two types of conduct are defined as follows: Minor misconduct is that for which the maximum impossible sentence under the UCMJ would not include a dishonorable discharge or confinement of more than one year by a general court martial.

Serious misconduct is;

- (1) felony conviction,
- (2) commission of a serious military or civilian offense that would warrant punitive discharge,
- (3) sexual acts or conduct accompanied by assault or coercion resulting in bodily or psychological harm to a person, and
- (4) multiple instances of substance abuse resulting in harm to a person or destruction of property.

The final rule change also added factors now considered in compelling circumstances for AWOL statutory bar, and willful misconduct and moral turpitude regulatory bars. Factors now considered are: Length and character of service exclusive of

...it is highly recommended that any chapter member who feels they may be affected by these changes to contact their local PVA National Service office for assistance.

the period of prolonged AWOL or misconduct, Reasons for prolonged AWOL or misconduct to include mental or cognitive impairment at the time of the prolonged AWOL or misconduct, to include but not limited to a clinical diagnosis of (or evidence that could later be medically determined to demonstrate existence of) posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, substance use disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), impulsive behavior, or cognitive disabilities, physical health, to include physical trauma and any side effects of medication, combat-related or overseas-related hardship, sexual abuse/assault, duress, coercion, or desperation, family obligations or comparable obligations to third parties, age, education, cultural background, and judgmental maturity, and whether a valid legal

defense would have precluded a conviction for AWOL or misconduct under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. For purposes of this circumstance, the defense must go directly to the substantive issue of absence or misconduct rather than to procedures, technicalities, or formalities. Although not specifically included in the regulatory text, VA will consider discrimination, including based on race or sex, in the compelling circumstances analysis.

Any chapter member who is a former service member and received a prior unfavorable COD determination may now request a new COD determination based on the changes under the new final rule. Any request for a new COD determination will be completed without the need for new and relevant evidence. New favorable decisions will have a claim invited; the invited claims would need to be filed as a supplemental claim on VA Form 21-0995

“Decision Review Request -Supplemental Claim. As there are multiple factors and considerations involved in applying for this updated review, it is highly recommended that any chapter member who feels they may be affected by these changes to contact their local PVA National Service office for assistance. If unsuccessful

in the above review process, chapter members may also consider submitting a request for a discharge upgrade. This process will be discussed separately in a future chapter article.

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BOSTON VA REGIONAL OFFICE

Joseph E. Badzmierowski  
Director of Field Services  
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phone: (617) 303-1395  
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1400 VFW Parkway, Room AG 60  
West Roxbury, MA 02132  
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Michael Snape, National Service Officer III  
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Augusta, ME 04330  
phone: (207) 621-7394  
fax: (207) 621-4829  
Serving Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont

BRONX SCI

Amauris Polanco, National Service Officer III  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
James J. Peters VAMC  
130 West Kingsbridge Rd., Room 1D-52A  
Bronx, NY 10468  
phone: (718) 584-9000 ext. 6272

MANHATTAN

Zachary T. Nuetzel, National Service Officer  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
201 Varick St., Room 4W59.50  
New York, NY 10014  
phone: (202) 416-1075  
zacharyn@pva.org  
Serving New York, New Jersey and Connecticut

SYRACUSE VAMC

Charlie Tocci, East-North Area Manager  
800 Irving Ave., Room C419  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
phone: (315) 425-4400 ext. 53317  
fax: (315) 425-2940  
Serving New York & Western MA



## NEW ENGLAND PVA CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

### The Event

Serving paralyzed and disabled Veterans for over 75 years, the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America is pleased to offer the 4th Annual Golf Classic. We invite all companies, individuals and friends of New England PVA to participate in this grand charity tournament.

### Tournament

11:00 a.m. Golfers welcome to pick up box lunch, test their luck at the putting contest or purchase raffle and Mulligan entries

Noon. Shotgun Start, rain or shine. Play will be a scramble format.

4:00 p.m. Putting contest finals

4:30 p.m. "Golf in Italy" buffet served by Raffael's Hingham.

### Registration

Golf \$600 – Foursome or \$150 Single  
Includes all meals and a swag bag

### Who Benefits

We hope to fill the playing field with 120 golfers supporting the free programs and services provided by New England PVA to paralyzed veterans throughout New England.

### NON-Profit

New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America is a Registered 501(c)3 Non-Profit. EIN: 04-6112881

### Questions

Contact Holly Warshaw

Phone 508-846-0538

Email [holly@pvanewengland.org](mailto:holly@pvanewengland.org)

**MONDAY  
AUGUST 19, 2024  
NOON  
SHOTGUN**



**SOUTH SHORE**

**COUNTRY CLUB**

274 South St., Hingham

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WE WILL CLOSE TOURNAMENT  
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Registrations Friday, August 2, 2024

[www.pvanewengland.org/golfclassic](http://www.pvanewengland.org/golfclassic)



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✉ [info@mobiusmobility.com](mailto:info@mobiusmobility.com) 🌐 [mobiusmobility.com](http://mobiusmobility.com) ☎ **1-833-346-4268**





# obi

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### PVA Submits Comments to Increase Safety & Dignity in Air Travel for Wheelchair & Scooter Users

In mid-June, PVA submitted comments, supported by 55 state and national disability rights organizations, to the long-awaited Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs. The NPRM seeks to strengthen the Air Carrier Access Act, to ensure passengers who use wheelchairs or scooters can travel safely and with dignity.

The NPRM addresses additional protections for air travel passengers who use wheelchairs and scooters by clarifying existing airline requirements and adding new ones, as well as overall expanding the rights of passengers with disabilities. The NPRM addressed topics such as: requirements for safe and dignified assistance; prompt enplaning, deplaning, and connecting assistance; mishandled wheelchairs and assistive devices; passenger notifications; prompt return of delayed wheelchairs or scooters; prompt repair or replacement of damaged wheelchairs or scooters; loaner

wheelchair accommodations; enhanced training for airline personnel and contractors; standards for on-board wheelchairs; size standards for lavatories on twin-aisle aircraft; and reimbursement of fare differences.

The NPRM also builds upon new requirements included in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The new law requires enhanced training requirements for personnel who perform manual transfers to and from aisle chairs and personnel who load and unload wheelchairs and scooters from the cargo. PVA's comments explained that these training requirements should be further enhanced by requiring more frequent and detailed training.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) will now review the comments received and make any needed changes to the proposed language. We are hopeful that in light of the critical need to make improvements that DOT will issue a final rule before the end of the year.

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Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:30pm



## New England Chapter

### **Major Steven Roy Andrew's Fishing Outreach**

**September 17,  
Lake Congamond, Southwick, MA**

## **Join Us at Our Upcoming Events**

additional dates to be announced soon.

**National Veterans Wheelchair Games  
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**NEPVA Chapter Golf Tournament  
August 19, Hingham, MA**

**Membership Picnic  
September 8, Marlboro, MA**

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