

Project 72,000 Square Miles: Bringing Our Mission to Every Corner of New England

By Mark Murphy, Executive Director NEPVA

Earlier this year, the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America launched an exciting new initiative - Project 72,000 Square Miles - a program dedicated to ensuring that every square mile of New England feels the positive impact of our mission. Whether through outreach, advocacy, or direct benefits support, our goal is simple: to reach every veteran we can, wherever they are.

Last month this innovative program took us to the Providence VA Medical Center. Our Chapter hosted an outreach table, met hundreds of veterans, and provided a wonderful lunch for those in attendance. It was a terrific day filled with great conversation, meaningful connections, and the reminder that our presence matters deeply to the veterans we serve. During our visit, several veterans stopped by our table thinking we were with the Wounded Warrior Project. It was a great opportunity to share who PVA is - and what makes our mission unique. We explained that Paralyzed Veterans of America and its Chapters serve veterans with spinal cord injury and disease, providing lifelong advocacy, benefits assistance, and community connection. Educating and

informing others about our work is a major goal of Project 72,000 Square Miles, as we seek to raise awareness of PVA's critical role in improving the lives of paralyzed and disabled veterans across New England.

*Project 72,000 Square Miles
is about more than outreach
– it is about connection,
community, and ensuring
that no veteran in our region
feels left behind.*

A special thank-you goes out to Chapter President and National Director Brad Carlson, his wife Kathy, and Board Member Keelan Zenion for representing the Chapter so well that day. We are also grateful to Danielle Hetu from the PVA Veterans Career Program New England Regional Office for joining us and sharing valuable resources with veterans. And a heartfelt thanks to Keelan for his help in coordinating this successful visit - his efforts truly helped make the day possible.

Project 72,000 Square Miles is about more than outreach – it is about connection, community, and ensuring that no veteran in our region feels left behind. Every visit, every

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Kathy Carlson, Danielle Hetu from PVA, Mark, Brad and Board member Keelan Zenion.

The New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America (New England PVA) is a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1947 that has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members – veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction.



The New England PVA uses that expertise to be the leading advocate for:

- Quality health care for our members
- Research and education addressing spinal cord injury and dysfunction
- Benefits available because of our members’ military service
- Civil rights and opportunities that maximize the independence of our members

To enable paralyzed veterans to continue to honor this commitment, we recruit and retain members who have the experience, energy, dedication, and passion necessary to manage the organization and ensure adequate resources to sustain the programs essential for the Chapter to achieve its mission.

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Executive Director’s Report

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA



Dear Friends,

As we move further into the fall season, our New England Chapter is building momentum through both new and ongoing initiatives. This past month we continued our exciting new outreach effort, Project 72,000 Square Miles, which aims to bring the mission of PVA to every corner of New England. Our recent visit to the Providence VA was an inspiring start to this program, and I encourage everyone to read more about it in my dedicated article in this issue of the CordWord.

Beyond our outreach work, the Chapter has been hard at work planning several key initiatives - both short-term and long-term - to strengthen our community and ensure that our programs continue to thrive. In November, I will be attending PVA’s Fall Board of Directors meeting in Orlando, Florida, alongside our National Director and Chapter President Brad Carlson and his wife Kathy. This annual meeting brings together leaders from across the country to share updates, collaborate on advocacy efforts, and discuss the future direction of PVA at the national and Chapter levels.

Here at home, planning is already well underway for our Annual Chapter Christmas Party this December

72,000

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handshake, every conversation strengthens the bonds that define who we are as an organization. Looking ahead, our next stop is at the White River Junction VA in Vermont. We are eager to meet the veterans there and continue this important work of bringing the mission of PVA to every part of New England. As a community we will continue to ensure that the spirit of service and advocacy that defines the essence of our New England Chapter reaches each mile of our 6 great states.

- a chance for our Board members, staff, dedicated volunteers, and VA partners to come together in celebration and gratitude for all we have accomplished this calendar year. It is always one of the highlights of the year, and we are looking forward to a joyful and meaningful gathering.

And believe it or not, while most of us are just getting used to cooler weather, our Golf Tournament Planning Committee has already been meeting regularly to prepare for next year’s Annual Golf Tournament. Running a successful tournament takes months of preparation and coordination, and we are laying the groundwork now to make next year’s event our best one yet.

As we continue through the fall, I am filled with gratitude for our members, volunteers, and supporters who make all of this possible. The work we do - from local outreach to national advocacy - only happens because of your dedication and partnership. We are working together to ensure that the impact of our Chapter reaches across all 72,000 square miles of New England and beyond.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

PVA Boccia Tournament Series - New England December 6-7, 2025 Brockton, MA

Hosted by
Paralyzed Veterans of America

Location

Brockton VA Medical Center
940 Belmont St
Brockton, MA 02301



Tournament Details

This event is open to all participants who qualify to play Boccia under the USA Boccia classification system. Beginners are welcome. If you do not have a classification, a temporary class will be assigned for this tournament. A brief Boccia 101 clinic will be held before the start of the event to ensure everyone has the same understanding of gameplay and rules.

The competition will include a double-elimination singles tournament, followed by a double-elimination pairs or team tournament. The number of participants and the event schedule may modify the competition details.



To Register Scan the QR code above or use the link below.

<https://events.blackthorn.io/en/Ho1cSeR7/g/A1JG83eZjC/pva-boccia-tournament-series-new-england-5a2FU10MHh/overview>

Event Cost

This event is free for all registered participants.

Event Meals

Lunch, light snacks, and water will be provided

Event Transportation

Participants are responsible for their own travel arrangements. Closest Airport: Boston Logan (BOS)

Event Lodging

Participants are responsible for their own travel arrangements.

Nearby Hotel

Residence Inn Boston/Brockton
124 Liberty St
Brockton, MA 02301

Tournament Contact

Bradford Carlson
President, New England Chapter
Paralyzed Veterans of America
becarlson1958@gmail.com



From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President

Dear Friends,

Fall is here, and that means Winter program planning is already in full swing! We're looking forward to another exciting season of adaptive sports and fellowship. This Winter, members can look forward to a ski clinic once again at beautiful Mount Sunapee in New Hampshire - a great opportunity to hit the slopes and stay active.

Before we get to the snow, however, we have one of our most popular events coming up soon - our Annual Chapter Boccia Tournament, held in collaboration with PVA National, taking place December 6-7 at the VA gym in Brockton. We're hoping to offer air rifling on Sunday, but if that doesn't work out, we'll be substituting cornhole, which is always a great time for all involved.

Looking ahead, we're also continuing work on a trap shoot event in Scarborough, Maine, which we hope to host sometime in 2026. We're currently looking for sponsors to help make that event possible, so if you or someone you know is interested in supporting a great cause, please reach out. The Chapter continues to grow stronger thanks to the dedication of our members, volunteers, and partners. We're always looking for volunteers to help with upcoming events - so if you'd like to get involved, I'd love to hear from you.

Our new outreach program, Project 72,000 Square Miles, is also growing nicely. We recently had a fantastic visit to the Providence VA, and we're planning more visits to VA facilities throughout New England. The goal is to reach both new and current members, strengthen connections, and raise awareness of our Chapter's mission within the broader veteran community.

On October 30th, we are proud to honor VA Nurse Darlene Hanley with a commemorative clock recognizing 30 years of exceptional care and dedication to Spinal Cord Injured Veterans. Darlene's compassion and commitment have made a lasting difference in so many lives, and we are deeply grateful to her - and to all VA medical staff - who work tirelessly on behalf of our members.

Finally, it is with sadness that I share the passing of former Board member Walter Farrington, who passed away in August. Walter was a longtime supporter of our Chapter, a friend to many, and someone whose presence always brought warmth and good humor to our gatherings. His dedication to his fellow veterans and his service to the

Chapter will be long remembered. On behalf of all of us, we extend our heartfelt condolences to Walter's family and friends. He will be deeply missed.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson
Chapter President & National Director



Pat and Walter Farrington at an NEPVA Banquet 2016.

Northeast Passage Adaptive Sports & Recreation Fall Schedule Cycling, Court Sports, Outdoor Archery

OUTDOOR ARCHERY Allenstown, NH

We will be on the archery range at Bear Brook State Park this fall. Come enjoy the fall foliage while we make some arrows fly! The range is wheelchair accessible. Equipment and instruction provided by Northeast Passage staff and volunteers.

If you anticipate using one of our Draw-Loc bows, please state that in your registration as we are limited to two Draw-Loc archers per event.

**Due to limited capacity and high demand for archery opportunities, we are asking participants to register for two fall archery dates and Wait List for the remaining options.

DATES: Wednesdays, October 22 from 12:00-2:00PM. Fee: \$20, Fees for Veterans are covered by a grant from the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs.

COURT SPORTS Durham, NH

Come join Northeast Passage at UNH's Hamel Recreation Center for a night of Court Sports. We will provide court wheelchairs, people to fill out teams, and all the equipment needed for the specific games. We usually play games such as wheelchair handball, Korf Ball and ultimate frisbee. This program is appropriate for participants of all abilities, ages, and levels of experience.

DATES: Wednesdays, October 22**, October 29, November 5 from 5:30-7:30PM

There is no cost for these events
**10/22 is 5:00PM-6:30PM

TO REGISTER:

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. Please contact **Northeast Passage at 603-862-0070 or northeast.passage@unh.edu or register online on our calendar.**

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for Veterans
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from the U.S.
Department
of Veteran's
Affairs!**



Thomas Ferland and boat Captain Kevin Lavender at weigh in.



Mike Guilbault and Boat Captain Steve Deguzis.

www.pvanewengland.org

Photographer Katie Joly.

Fishing with Mikey G!

by Mike Guilbault

Congamond Bass Tournament

On September 16, I was able to attend the Gaylord Sports Association bass fishing tournament on Congamond Lake in Southwick, MA. We had an amazing day out on the lake that Tuesday for the Veterans Fishing Tournament with 25 Veterans enjoying time on the water! The fishing was tough but there were a lot of keepers and a day on the water is always a great day! There were three Connecticut members who attended. Ed Dusick, Thomas Ferland and BOD member Paul Nyerick. I too attended along with our skiing friend, the speedy Alexis Courneen. It was a great day in my boat, Captain Steve and I not only went fishing but we did some catching too. Even though we only weighed in 2 fish we did a lot of catching, sadly they were not big ones that we caught and didn't meet the minimum length to weigh in. My boat Captain and I did get 18 fish which kept us happy. I prefer constantly having bites and not just drowning baits so catching was fun but 16 of them had to get thrown back for being too small but better catching a small fish than none at all. Sadly the one fish I hooked but didn't get into the boat was good size and would have given us another to weigh! I hate losing fish and losing that one which wasn't a short stunk! The fun thing was we had a little bit of a Team Chowdah ski team reunion as a few people from our local WSC who would also attend the National Clinic in Snowmass, CO. with us also joined us for the first time to enjoy this fishing tournament. Skiers traded in skis for rods! The weigh-in and an awards luncheon topped off the day.



Team Chowdah---Eddie, Mike, Alexis and Tom

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Congratulations to the winners of the Tournament on Congamond Lake!



1st Place – Veteran Robert Campagnon with boat captain Noah Winslow (both fishing this tournament for the first time!) – total weight 14.01 lbs

2nd Place – Veteran Scott Rutkauskas with boat captain Scott Janus – total weight 11.59 lbs

3rd Place – Veteran John Samson with boat captain Mike Shimels – total weight 11.22 lbs

Lunker Award – Veteran Diane Russo with boat captain Damon Collins – 3.41 lbs

Many thanks to the staff of Gaylord Sports Association that organize these tournaments with their sponsors and partners including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. A huge thank you to Joe Kowalski of the Major Steven Roy Andrews Fishing Outreach Program Inc. for helping make the day a success, and for providing prizes thanks to his amazing sponsors. Special thanks as well to Move United Sport and Connecticut BASS Nation for their support in making this event possible.



Eddie Dusick and Captain Vinny Mucci head out to find some fish.

Senate Holds Hearing on the State of SCI/D Care

On September 17, PVA National President Robert Thomas testified before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee in a hearing examining the state of VA's spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) system of care. In both his written and oral statements, President Thomas expressed PVA's firm belief that VA is the best health care provider for disabled veterans, particularly those with catastrophic disabilities. In his oral testimony, he focused on our primary concerns about VA's ability to continue serving catastrophically disabled veterans both now and in the future: ongoing staffing vacancies, delayed infrastructure improvements, and the continued shortage of specialty long-term care beds.

Staffing levels for the SCI/D system of care are detailed in Veterans Health Administration Directive 1176. The requirements outlined in this directive are based on the level of care needed to maintain the health and well-being of veterans with SCI/D. Unfortunately, VA leaders have long treated them as optional rather than a directive based on best care standards. As a result, VA can only staff a nominal number of beds in some locations. President Thomas told lawmakers that the VA must be able to staff to the level needed to serve veterans with SCI/D. He also noted that VA needs new approaches to recruiting medical professionals in hard to recruit locations and to streamline hiring for medical professionals.

Next, he expressed concern about badly needed infrastructure improvements that remain unfunded. VA's SCI/D system of care is comprised of 25 acute care centers and six long-term care centers with an average age of nearly 40 years old. Many of the older centers have only had minor renovations. More than a dozen SCI/D-related construction projects on VA's Strategic Capital Investment Planning list continue to go unfunded year after year. He reminded committee members that VA's SCI/D system of care is not replicated outside of VA and urged them to consider this when allocating funding for the department. He also testified that VA should fund facilities that support the types of services, like SCI/D care, which the department uniquely provides. Increased investment in these areas would greatly strengthen VA's specialty care services and ensure their future availability.

Finally, he noted the nation's lack of adequate long-term care options poses an enormous problem for people with catastrophic disabilities. There are very few long-term care facilities that are

capable of appropriately serving veterans with SCI/D. With less than 180 beds, VA's six existing SCI/D long-term care facilities are not enough for the tens of thousands of veterans with SCI/D.

Mr. Thomas further stressed that many of our members also depend on VA home and community-based services throughout their lives. He expressed appreciation of Congress's passage last year of the Senator Elizabeth Dole Act (EDA) but urged the committee to exercise its oversight authority to ensure it is implemented as Congress intended.

During the Q&A session, President Thomas had the opportunity to speak about the barriers our members encounter when attempting to access some of VA's community care providers. Also, he reiterated the importance of the committee monitoring the implementation of the EDA. He noted that while VA says the Veteran Directed Care program is available at all major VA facilities, the feedback we have received from the field suggests some of them exist in name only.

Appearing on the first panel with President Thomas were Dr. Shelly Hoover, a Navy veteran with ALS; Mandi Bailey, from I AM ALS's Veteran ALS Action Committee; and Mary Ward, a veteran spouse, caregiver, and Elizabeth Dole Foundation Fellow. Together, they offered powerful testimony on the needs of catastrophically disabled veterans and their caregivers.

The second panel consisted of VA's principal witness, Dr. Erica Scavella, Assistant Under Secretary of Health for Clinical Services and Dr. Manosha Wickremasinghe, Executive Director of VA's SCI/D System of Care. Dr. Scavella said VA's mission is to address not just the immediate needs, but also the long-term challenges and opportunities facing the veteran community affected by SCI/D. As they recognize the unique and evolving needs of veterans with SCI/D, their response continues to center on specialized, comprehensive care. She noted these complex conditions require individualized approaches, and VA's commitment is to leverage the full depth of the department's resources and compassionate expertise to optimize the quality of life for all veterans. In addition to talking about facility-based care, she spoke of the importance of supporting veterans in their communities noting that the recent passage

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The Passing of Neil Williams

It is with deep sadness that we share the news of the passing of Neil Williams, former Chapter Board Member, PVA National Director, and a true champion of the New England PVA. Neil passed away on 12 October. His life and service left a lasting legacy in both our local community and nationally.

Neil was born in 1949 and led a life marked by commitment, leadership, and compassion. Over the years, he devoted himself to advancing the cause of people with spinal cord injury/disease, particularly through his roles in PVA governance and grassroots advocacy work. As a PVA National Director, Neil played an instrumental part in shaping the organization's direction and ensuring our voices were heard in policy and legislative arenas. He never shied away from a tough issue and consistently pushed for improvements in accessibility, health outcomes, and veterans' rights.

Within our New England Chapter, Neil was deeply involved in local government relations programming. He worked tirelessly with local, state, and federal stakeholders to make meaningful progress in policies that affect persons with spinal cord injury/disease. His guidance, mentorship, and willingness to roll up his sleeves made him a pillar in our community.

While we mourn his loss, we also celebrate the impact he made - the doors he opened, the relationships he forged,

of the EDA has enabled VA to expand support for veterans facing complex medical conditions. She cited section 120 of the bill, which raises the maximum per-veteran expenditure for home- and community-based services from 65 percent to 100 percent of Community Living Center costs, which can now be applied to disabilities such as SCI/D. She said these changes would directly translate into expanded options for home-based care and greater financial flexibility.

During their Q&A session, Dr. Scavella and Dr. Wickremasinghe fielded questions about staffing and some of the challenges of

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and the energy he brought to our mission. In the coming days and weeks, we will look for ways to honor Neil's memory and to continue the work to which he dedicated so much of himself.

This obituary provides full details on Neil's life, family, and services. For reference, you can read it here: [Neil Williams Obituary](#)

Neil's passing is a profound loss for our organization, and for every life he touched. But his legacy lives on in each of us who continue this work. Let us honor him by steadfastly advocating for accessibility, equity, and dignity for all.



recruiting qualified personnel to care for veterans with SCI/D, particularly in rural areas. Dr. Wickremasinghe informed the committee on how tele-health, tele-mental health, and tele-wound care is being leveraged to care for these veterans. She also talked about some of the opportunities veterans with SCI/D have to participate in studies and other research affecting them.

The hearing lasted about two hours and you can view a recording of it here. You can view each of the witnesses' written statements as well. PVA looks forward to continuing to work with the Senate in strengthening services for veterans with SCI/D.

Service Officers Report

DIC (Dependent Indemnity Compensation)

by Michael Snape,
Senior National Service Officer

Fall brings an explosion of colors as the leaves change, but also a change in temperatures here in New England. Please make sure to adjust clothing choices to account for the change in seasons. This month’s article is on proposed legislation that may affect chapter members and some surviving spouses concerning additional DIC (Dependent Indemnity Compensation) entitlement.

The VA currently pays what is known as the “DIC kicker (\$351.02)”, which is an additional amount paid over and above what a surviving spouse normally receives for DIC (currently around \$1653.00 per month) when a veteran passes from a service connected condition, and was in receipt of compensation for that service-connected disability rated as totally disabling for a continuous period of eight years prior to their passing.

The Justice for ALS Veterans Act of 2025 (H.R. 1685/S. 749) would ensure the surviving spouses of veterans who die of service-connected ALS receive the DIC kicker regardless of how long the veteran was service-connected for ALS, due to the rapid progression of this disease. The bill proposes that the increased compensation would apply retroactively to veterans who died from ALS on or after October 1, 2022. This would entitle some surviving spouses to a significant retroactive payment if the bill were to be passed in its current version. The bill also directs the VA to provide reports on other diseases that they determine should be treated in a comparable manner to ALS for the purposes of “DIC kicker” eligibility.

The bill is currently in the legislative process; it has been introduced in both the House and Senate and has been referred to the respective Committees on Veterans’ Affairs in both chambers. Updates to the proposed legislation will be addressed in a future article.

PVA Announces ABA Webinar Series

Join us in November, and December as the U.S. Access Board presents for PVA members three dynamic webinars exploring accessibility under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA).

Please note that if the federal government shuts down due to a lapse in funding, then the October webinar may be postponed.

- November 20 at 3:00 PM ET dive into practical guidance on making commissaries and recreation facilities accessible for all service members, retirees, and their families ([register here](#))



- December 10 at 3:00 PM ET explore inclusive outdoor design standards that open trails, campsites, and beach access to everyone ([register here](#))



...get to know
your PVA service
officer, they can
help you navigate
through the
questions you may
have on disability
ratings and
navigating
the VA system.

DOJ Sues Uber for Disability Discrimination Against Wheelchair Users and Service Animal Handlers

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) sued Uber Technologies, Inc. (Uber) for discriminating against people with disabilities who use mobility devices, such as stowable wheelchairs, and service animals. Specifically, the complaint alleges that Uber and its drivers violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by routinely refusing service to people with disabilities; imposing cleaning fees for service animals; charging cancellation fees to those denied service; and refusing to modify its policies, practices, and procedures. The complaint alleges that Uber is aware of the disability discrimination but fails to prevent and remedy the issues by failing to train its drivers and customer service personnel on their ADA obligations; monitor its drivers to prevent discrimination; or provide meaningful relief to people discriminated against.

In addition, the DOJ alleges that after it notified Uber of its investigation into Uber’s disability discrimination, Uber only instituted a voluntary self-identification feature that allows riders to disclose that they will be traveling with a service animal. However, the complaint alleges that Uber continued to discriminate against people with disabilities. The DOJ has asked the court to declare Uber’s actions, policies, and practices, as violating the ADA; order Uber to modify its policies, practices, and procedures to comply with the ADA; order Uber to provide ADA training to its drivers and personnel; award monetary damages, \$125 million, to people who were discriminated against; and assess additional monetary penalties.

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA – REGIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

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House Approves Several Veteran Bills

On September 15, the House passed several veteran-related bills under suspension of the rules. When bills are considered “under suspension,” it generally means that the bills have broad bipartisan support, so the House leadership waives the regular rules for debate and prohibits floor amendments.

Several of the approved bills were supported by PVA. They include:

- The Delivering Digitally to Our Veterans Act of 2025 (H.R. 348), which would allow the VA to use various communication methods to engage with veterans about VA services.
 - The Protecting Veteran Access to Telemedicine Services Act of 2025 (H.R. 1107), which would allow certain healthcare professionals to prescribe controlled medications from a telehealth visit rather than an in-person appointment.
 - The Women Veterans Cancer Care Coordination Act of 2025 (H.R. 1860), which would improve coordination across VA when it comes to breast cancer care coordination
 - The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship Opportunity Act (H.R. 2034), which would improve eligibility, pay, and usage of this educational program.
 - The Honoring Our Heroes Act of 2025 (H.R. 2721), which would create a pilot program to provide headstones or burial markers for veterans who passed away on or before November 1, 1990.
 - The TRAVEL Act of 2025 (H.R. 3400), which seeks to improve access to healthcare for veterans living in U.S. territories by approving traveling physicians for areas like American Samoa,
- Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands, where VA care is almost non-existent.
- The Modernizing All Veterans and Survivors Claims Processing Act (H.R. 3854), which seeks to improve the efficiency and accuracy for claims and requires the VA to submit an annual report to Congress that accounts for the cause of death for veterans that have service-connected disability ratings.
 - The Rural Veteran Improved Access to Benefits Act (H.R. 3951), which is intended to improve access to qualified claims examiners, particularly for veterans in rural areas, by authorizing temporary licensure requirements.
- These bills have been presented to the Senate for their consideration; so, additional work may be needed before they can be passed and presented to the President.



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PVA Briefs Congressional Staff on the Availability of Homecare for Veterans with SCI/D

On September 22, PVA’s National Legislative Director Morgan Brown participated in a discussion on Capitol Hill about ways to improve home care benefits available to our nation’s veterans, eligible military family members, and their caregivers through Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, and VA. The event provided an opportunity to talk with congressional staff about the availability of homecare for veterans and how Congress can help to increase access to these services for veterans while improving support for the caregivers who provide this essential care.

After providing attendees with an overview of the demographics of veterans with SCI/D, Mr. Brown explained that both the Department of Defense and the VA’s caregiver programs can enhance their ability to keep loved ones safe and healthy at home by improving access to training, expanding eligibility for certain services, increasing coordination with local resources, and providing targeted support for specific health challenges. He also described some of the current benefits that the surviving spouses of ALS veterans receive and took the opportunity to stress the importance of passing the Justice for ALS Veterans Act (H.R. 1685 /S. 749). If passed, this legislation would make surviving spouses of service-connected ALS veterans eligible for a higher rate of VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

Mr. Brown also spoke of the importance of VA quickly implementing the Senator Elizabeth Dole Act (EDA), especially Section 120, which increases the amount VA can pay for home and community-based services. Raising the cap on how much the VA can pay for the cost of home care from 65 percent of the cost of nursing home care to 100 percent, and even more if it’s in the veteran’s best interest, will be extremely helpful for families with veterans on ventilators who bear a significant part of the cost of care—financially, physically, and emotionally—for their loved one. He also noted that as VA struggles with a shortage of nursing staff, the three-year homemaker and home health aide services pilot program in Section 126 of the EDA would allow greater numbers of catastrophically disabled veterans to receive care at home.

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VA Extends PCAFC Eligibility for “Legacy” Veterans’ Caregivers

In July, VA announced it would propose a rule extending Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) eligibility for the program’s legacy participants. In the simplest terms, legacy participants are Post-9/11 veterans and caregivers who were enrolled in PCAFC before it was expanded to veterans of other eras in 2020, and legacy applicants are veterans, servicemembers, and their family caregivers who applied for PCAFC before October 1, 2020, and were accepted into the program on or after that date.

On September 29, VA published an interim final rule extending the transition period for legacy participants through September 30, 2028. Extending their transition period by three years ensures the department has sufficient time to issue a new, revised PCAFC final rule, which could include regulatory changes impacting the legacy cohort.

PVA Policy Priorities

With a new Congress and a new Administration in Washington, D.C., PVA’s priorities for 2025 are focused on ensuring access to the care and benefits PVA members have earned and the civil rights protections they deserve. We look forward to working with our champions to move these priorities forward throughout the year.

PVA priorities for 2025 are as follows:

- Protect VA’s Specialized Health Care Services
- Increase Access to Long-Term Services and Supports for Veterans with SCI/D
- Improve Veterans’ Financial Security
- Enhance Access to Health Care Services for Veterans with SCI/D
- Defend the Freedoms of Veterans with Disabilities

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