

Veterans Day: Honoring Service and Sacrifice

Each year on November 11th, our nation pauses to honor the courage, sacrifice, and service of all who have worn the uniform of the United States Armed Forces. Veterans Day is more than a date on the calendar - it is a moment of collective reflection and deep gratitude. It reminds us of the ideals our veterans defended and the responsibilities we share to uphold those ideals in our communities, our institutions, and in how we treat one another.

For those of us at the New England Chapter of PVA, Veterans Day carries a special weight. We know that the call to serve does not end when a veteran takes off the uniform. Many of our members continue to serve in new ways - by advocating for accessibility and inclusion, mentoring younger veterans, volunteering in their communities, and showing what resilience truly looks like. Their service did not stop at the gates of a base or the end of a deployment; it continues each day in how they live their lives with dignity, determination, and purpose.

At the New England PVA, we are proud to stand alongside these veterans as we work to ensure that every paralyzed veteran in New England has access to the healthcare, benefits, and adaptive opportunities they deserve. Veterans Day is a reminder of why our mission matters. The freedoms we enjoy were secured through the courage and sacrifice of those who served - and it is our duty to ensure that those who gave so much are never left behind.

This November, I encourage all of us to take a moment not only to thank a veteran but to truly listen to their story. Attend a local ceremony, visit a veterans' memorial, or reach out to a friend or family member who served. The simple act of connection and understanding honors the spirit of Veterans Day more than words alone ever could.

Many of our members continue to serve in new ways - by advocating for accessibility and inclusion, mentoring younger veterans, volunteering in their communities, and showing what resilience truly looks like.

To our members, supporters, and partners - thank you for standing with us in this important work. Your commitment ensures that the voices and needs of paralyzed veterans continue to be heard across New England and beyond. On behalf of the entire New England Chapter, I hope you had meaningful and reflective Veterans Day. May we continue to honor those who served not just with our words, but with our actions every day of the year.



PVA at Arlington National Cemetery. photo Keith Melnick

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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NEPVA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

1208 VFW Parkway, Ste 301,
West Roxbury, MA 02132
Telephone: (617) 942-8678, 1-(800) 660-1181
FAX: (857) 203-9685;
Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:30pm

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Executive Director’s Report

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

Dear Friends,

As we move along further into November, a month rich with meaning for veterans and their families, I find myself reflecting on the importance of connection - connection to one another, to our shared experiences, and to the broader veteran community across New England and beyond. In my dedicated article this month, I share a personal reflection on Veterans Day and what it means to honor those who have worn the uniform. It is a day that reminds us not only of service and sacrifice but of the enduring bonds that unite us as veterans and advocates. I hope you will take a few moments to read that reflection and to join me in honoring the men and women who continue to serve their communities long after their military careers have ended.

I was proud to represent our Chapter at the 1st Annual VetFest event held November 7-9 at the Anheuser-Busch Brewery in Merrimack, New Hampshire. The event, organized by the Veterans Resource Alliance of New Hampshire (VRANH), brought together veterans and their families from across the region for a weekend filled with joy and community. From a vibrant resource hub to live music, food trucks, games, and even a cornhole tournament, VetFest was a reminder of how powerful it is when veterans come together. Our Chapter hosted an informational table at the event, where we shared giveaways and spoke with scores of veterans and their families about our programs and services. I was delighted to be joined by Brad

Carlson, Chapter President and National Director, and his wife Kathy, as well as Board Members Mike Moran, Jim Wallack and Ericka Haddad. Their presence and engagement exemplified the spirit of teamwork that drives our mission forward every day.

In this issue, you will also find a wonderful piece by Board of Director Bernice (DeBlois) Bartlett, who recently attended the PVA Women Veterans Retreat. Bernice’s article offers a firsthand look at the importance of creating spaces where women veterans can connect, share their experiences, and support one another. I encourage you to read her reflection – it is an inspiring reminder that every veteran’s story adds depth and strength to our collective community.

Looking ahead, I will soon be attending the PVA Fall Board of Directors Meeting in Orlando, Florida, where I will join leaders from across the country to discuss upcoming initiatives, advocacy efforts, and best practices that continue to shape the work we do locally. I look forward to bringing back insights that will help strengthen our Chapter’s programs and outreach here in New England.

Finally, as the year draws to a close, we are gearing up for one of our most anticipated annual events – our Annual Boccia and Air Rifle Tournament in collaboration with PVA National, taking place December 6-7 at the Brockton VA. This event always brings out an incredible sense of competition, friendship, and fun, and we hope to see many of you there. You can find more details about it in this edition of the newsletter.

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Washington Update

SVAC Hearing Looks At VA Disability Compensation Benefits

On October 30, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a hearing focused on examining the veterans' disability compensation process at the VA. PVA joined advocates from other veterans service organizations in pushing back on recent reporting from the Washington Post that claimed VA's disability compensation is "too generous."

SVAC Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS) opened the hearing with a reference to the Washington Post articles. He stated that, "I have heard from numerous veterans and groups who are frustrated that these articles have left an impression that veterans are engaging in widespread fraud in the disability claims space. The cases of fraud highlighted in these articles do not reflect the reality of who veterans are, the vast majority of the veteran population, or the values veterans embody."

Jeremy Villanueva, Associate Legislative Director, testified before the committee on behalf of PVA. In his oral statement, Mr. Villanueva said, "It's disgraceful when disabled veterans are portrayed as fraudsters and cheats simply for accessing earned benefits. He further stated that, "It is a disservice to the sacrifices of the many men and women who have served this nation to suggest that large sums of money are being wasted simply because veterans receive earned benefits for service-connected conditions."

Mr. Villanueva further noted that PVA has gone on record numerous times to discuss ways to make the disability compensation system less vulnerable to fraud and

waste, while ensuring that veterans are fairly compensated for their conditions. His statement focused on two of those ways: ensuring proper compensation and pension exams and reviewing Disability Benefits Questionnaires for quality assurance.

The belief that the system is not plagued by fraud but could be improved was shared by the VA Inspector General and a representative from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) as well. VA's Inspector General, Cheryl Mason, said it was "reprehensible for any person or entity to suggest that many veterans are hustling or scamming to get benefits." She told committee members that if staff with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) discover, while doing audit or inspection work, evidence of fraud, they immediately share with OIG investigators. Conversely, when OIG investigators identify weaknesses in the system through their investigations, they provide that information to the audit staff for further review.

Elizabeth Curda, GAO's Director, Education, Workforce and Income Security testified that, "VA has made some progress in addressing these high-risk issues, such as identifying deficiency root causes and establishing action plans to address them." She further stated that more work is needed to address the concerns. For example, she pointed out that GAO's 2024 and 2025 reports identified opportunities to strengthen VA's oversight of the quality of exams provided by contracted medical providers (examiners). For example, GAO found incorrect financial incentive payments to contractors. To address this and other

shortfalls, GAO made five recommendations. All five remain open as of October 2025. VA has partially addressed one and described plans to address the others.

Offering a uniquely differing view, was Army Lt. Colonel (Ret.), Daniel Gade, PhD. He feels the VA disability apparatus has strayed from its purpose and lost sight of its mission. He told the committee that VA should focus more on supporting the transitioning service members and less on compensation. He identified the three principles he believes the committee should pursue to fix the disability compensation system. First, the goal of any system of veterans benefits and care should be to return veterans as closely as possible to the life situations they would have found themselves in but for their service. Second, the system should incentivize desired outcomes by linking treatment for an illness with the compensation associated with it. In short, if you don't get treatment for your condition, you have no right to expect the taxpayer to fund its effects. Third, the system needs total reform in nature and types of disabilities compensated. Those injuries not directly caused by military service might be good targets for treatment rather than compensation.

The potential outcomes of this hearing could reverberate for quite some time.

From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President

Dear Friends,

As autumn draws to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on some recent highlights and share what's ahead for our Chapter.

On October 30th, I was honored to join our Chapter Executive Director Mark Murphy and fellow Board Member Gary Jezierski in presenting a commemorative clock to West Roxbury VA nurse Darlene Hanley, who is retiring after decades of dedicated service to veterans. The VA hosted a wonderful surprise party in her honor, and it was a joy to celebrate Darlene's remarkable career and commitment to the veteran community.

Later this month, in my capacity as National Director to PVA, I will be representing our Chapter at the Fall PVA Board of Directors meeting in Orlando, along with my wife Kathy and Mark Murphy. We are hopeful for



safe travels and productive meetings.

Signups are now open for the Winter Ski Clinic - make sure to secure your spot early! Also, don't miss our Annual Boccia and Air Rifle Tournament at the Brockton VA on December 6th and 7th. We were fortunate to confirm air rifle this year, and we're looking forward to another great turnout.

In addition, Mark, myself, and the Project 72,000 Square Miles program team will be visiting the White River Junction VA in Vermont on December 9th, and we're eager to connect with our Vermont veterans and VA staff up there.

As we move into November, I want to extend my warmest wishes to everyone for the upcoming Marine Corps Birthday (Semper Paratus!), Veterans Day, and a very Happy Thanksgiving and holiday season. Thank you for all you do to support our mission and each other.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson, Chapter President & National Director



Join PVA Online Fitness Classes

PVA Members: Become Warrior Strong!

PVA is proud to launch PVA Online Fitness + Wellness, a free program powered by Warrior Strong and designed exclusively for Veterans facing mobility challenges. This dynamic new program, which is inclusive of all levels and abilities, offers expert-led fitness and wellness classes that are accessible from the comfort of your home. Whether you're looking to build strength, improve flexibility, reduce stress, or simply increase your activity level, this program has something for you.

Beyond physical fitness, our classes support whole-body wellness through mindfulness practices, including meditation and breathwork. Benefits include improved cardiovascular health, cognitive improvements (including better reflexes, memory, and hand-eye coordination), increased strength and endurance, improved stress management, and mental health relief.



*Check out our class
schedule using the QR
and join us on
your fitness journey.*

VA Winter Sports Clinic Returns to Mt. Sunapee: January 12–15, 2026

The highly anticipated VA Winter Sports Clinic, held in partnership with the New England Healing Sports Association (NEHSA), will return to Mt. Sunapee, New Hampshire from January 12–15, 2026. This annual event brings together veterans from across the region for 4 days of adaptive skiing, snowboarding, and winter recreation - providing opportunities for friendship, wellness, and therapeutic outdoor adventure.

The clinic is designed for veterans of all ability levels, including those with spinal cord injuries, amputations, visual impairments, or other disabilities. Expert instructors from NEHSA and a dedicated team of volunteers will be on hand to provide individualized coaching and support, ensuring a safe, welcoming, and empowering experience for every participant.

The New England PVA is proud to once again provide financial support for the clinic through a charitable donation. We have long been a partner in this event, helping expand access to adaptive winter sports for Veterans throughout New England. In addition to funding support, Chapter members will be participating once again in this year's clinic as athletes, volunteers, and ambassadors for adaptive sports.



Veterans interested in attending the 2026 Winter Sports Clinic can register directly through NEHSA.

To Register:

Visit NEHSA's website at [NEHSA.org](https://www.nehsa.org) and navigate to the VA Winter Sports Clinic event page.

Complete the online registration form, including required medical and eligibility documentation.

NEHSA staff will follow up with participants to confirm placement and coordinate equipment, lodging, and schedule details.

Contact NEHSA

at 603-763-9158 for additional information.

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-5a2FUi10MHh/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



Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat: Connection, Camaraderie and Confidence

By: Bernice (DeBlois) Bartlett, Chapter Board Member

My husband and caregiver, John F. Hutchins, and I were honored to attend the PVA Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat (WVER) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, from September 26-29, 2025. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the New England Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America for making this trip possible.

Having attended previous WVERs, I was thrilled to reconnect with familiar faces and meet new friends. There's truly nothing quite like being surrounded by other women veterans with spinal cord injuries and related conditions. Our numbers may be smaller than those of our male counterparts, but our voices are growing stronger every year - and being heard. If I had to describe the retreat in one word, it would be camaraderie.

Each day was filled with informative seminars and inspiring speakers. Topics included "Women's Health Research," and "How to Be a PVA Leader," featuring PVA Vice President Anne Robinson (via live video) and PVA Senior Vice President Tammy Jones. Another especially engaging session, "Leading with Confidence in Male-Dominated Spaces," was presented by the Anita Bloom Committee and featured sportscaster Hannah Storm via live video. The insights and encouragement shared throughout the retreat were truly empowering.



Lancôme, generously provided professional hair and makeup sessions for attendees.

The insights and encouragement shared throughout the retreat were truly empowering.

The Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis provided exceptional accommodations and delicious meals - an impressive buffet that offered something for everyone (and even managed to keep my husband's blood sugar in check!). Caregivers had their own schedule and activities, including a restorative visit to the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. With temperatures reaching 86 degrees, the walk was both relaxing and refreshing - especially for John, who had undergone heart surgery earlier this year. I'm always reminded that caregivers deserve recognition for their constant dedication and support.

The retreat's theme was the Minnesota State Fair, and for our closing dinner, we embraced the fun by donning our cowgirl outfits. The evening featured a raffle, plenty of laughter, and a wonderful sense of celebration. Our main sponsor, Lancôme, generously provided professional hair and makeup sessions for attendees - a truly special treat!



Adaptive Yoga classes

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EVENT SCHEDULE FY26

December 2025

PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Nevada	December 4-7, 2025	Las Vegas, NV
PVA Bocchia Tournament Series: New England	December 6-7, 2025	Brockton, MA

January 2026

PVA Wheelchair Rugby Invitational	January 30-February 1, 2026	Louisville, KY
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February 2026

PVA Bocchia Tournament Series: Bayou Gulf States	February 7-8, 2026	Gulfport, MS
PVA Airgun Tournament Series: Central Florida	February 14-15, 2026	Orlando, FL
PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Florida Gulf Coast	February 25-27, 2026	Tampa, FL
PVA Outdoor Experience: Maine Winter Sports	February 25- March 1, 2026	Carrabassett Valley, ME

March 2026

PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Tri-State Tournament	March 13-15, 2026	Beaverton, OR
PVA Billiards Tournament Series: Mid-Atlantic	March 14-15, 2026	Midlothian, VA
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Southeastern Challenge	March 27-29, 2026	Appling, GA

April 2026

PVA Bass Tournament Series: Bluegrass Bass Bash	April 10-12, 2026	Kuttawa, KY
PVA Off-Road Paracycling Camp: Pocahontas State Park	April 16-18, 2026	Chesterfield, VA
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Citrus Slam	April 17-19, 2026	Kissimmee, FL
PVA Bowling Tournament Series: Texas	April 22-24, 2026	San Antonio, TX
PVA Billiards Tournament Series: Mid-America	April 23-25, 2026	Oklahoma City, OK
PVA Wheelchair Pickleball Invitational	April 25-26, 2026	Franklin, WI

May 2026

PVA Bass Tournament Series: Land of Lincoln	May 1-3, 2026	Sesser, IL
PVA Bocchia Tournament Series: Puerto Rico (Year-End)	May 2-3, 2026	San Juan, PR
Intro to Paracycling Series: Salt Lake City	May 4-5, 2026	Salt Lake City, UT
Intro to Paracycling Series: Milwaukee	May 20-21, 2026	Milwaukee, WI
PVA Trapshooting Tournament Series: Vaughan	May 22-24, 2026	Whittington, IL
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Buckeye Bash	May 29-31, 2026	Cortland, OH
PVA Airgun Tournament Series: Texas	May 30-31, 2026	San Antonio, TX

Service Officers Report

What options are there if your claim is denied?

by Zachary T. Nuetzel
National Service Officer

Hello NEPVA. I hope everyone is adjusting well to the new schedule now that daylight savings is in effect. The claims process and obtaining service connection can be a long and oftentimes a frustrating process. Many times, veterans will submit an original claim for service connection, and after many months of waiting for news on a VA decision, are disappointed to find that the VA has denied service connection for their condition or they disagree with the outcome of the VA decision. If the VA denies a condition, that a veteran believes is due to service, there are options to dispute the VA decision. In this article, I want to highlight two of these options: Higher-Level Review (HLR) and Supplemental Claim.

Although there are additional options to dispute a denial such as appealing the decision to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA), most often, the first disputes will be through an HLR or Supplemental Claim. When the VA decides on a claim for service connection, they should also send notice of your rights for further review. If you disagree with the decision, you can choose to appeal in one of the provided lanes.

One of the options to consider is a Higher-Level Review. A Higher-Level Review is submitted on VA Form 20-0996. A Higher-level Review is used when you believe that the VA has made an error with either applying the law or evaluating the evidence of record. In order to pursue this route, you have one year to submit the 20-0996 to the VA from the date of the decision letter. A Higher-Level Review is a De Novo review from a higher-level adjudicator. The higher-level adjudicator is not supposed to provide deference to the previous decision. When pursuing a Higher-Level Review, the veteran has the option for them or their representative to conduct an informal conference. An informal conference is a meeting with the adjudicator where; you can identify the reasons that you disagree with the VA decision. It is important to note that unlike

a supplemental claim, you are not allowed to provide new evidence in an HLR.

If you disagree with the decision and do not want to pursue an HLR, or you have just completed an HLR that did not reverse the outcome, or it has been greater than 1 year since the VA notified you of their decision, you can pursue a Supplemental Claim. A Supplemental Claim is filed on a VA Form 20-0995. To open a supplemental claim, the VA

The claims process and obtaining service connection can be a long and oftentimes a frustrating process.

must receive evidence that is both new and relevant. For example, a positive medical opinion that links the condition to service. In a supplemental claim, you can provide new evidence to the record, however, you do not get an opportunity to have an informal conference. In order to potentially maintain the original effective date, the 20-0995 must be submitted within a year of the notification letter. However, if more than a year has passed, you can still submit a supplemental claim to re-open a claim previously adjudicated.

Both higher-level reviews and supplemental claims have advantages and disadvantages. An HLR allows an informal conference, while a supplemental claim does not offer an informal conference, it does allow new evidence to be submitted. Since both options can be beneficial, it is important to plan accordingly what will be the best path. It is recommended that if you disagree with a decision, contact your local service officer to discuss what is the best option in your circumstances. This is a brief overview of two of the appeal routes. We hope to expand on this in future articles. If you or a veteran you know has questions regarding these, please contact your local PVA service officer.

...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.

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).

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.



December 10 at 3:00 PM ET explore inclusive outdoor design standards that open trails, campsites, and beach access to everyone.



PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA – REGIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

BOSTON VA REGIONAL OFFICE

Joseph E. Badzmierowski
Director of Field Services
J.F.K. Federal Building - Room - 1575 C
BOSTON, MA 02203
phone: (617) 303-1395
fax: (617) 303-1396

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Augusta, ME 04330
phone: (207) 621-7394
fax: (207) 621-4829
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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

Daisy Lozada, Senior Administrative Assistant
Paralyzed Veterans of America
201 Varick St., Room 4W59.50
New York, NY 10014
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SYRACUSE VAMC

Charlie Tocci, East-North Area Manager
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Survey for Project Focused on Improving the Airport Journey of Wheelchair Users

InterVISTAS is currently collaborating with Indiana University – Bloomington (IUB) to collect information on the air travel experiences of people with disabilities. Funded by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, this project strives to identify ways to enhance the air travel experiences of individuals using wheelchairs. PVA is a member of the panel overseeing this project.

How to Participate:

1. Register: Please first complete the screening survey. This will only take 5 minutes.
2. Survey: Once registered, eligible participants (those aged 18 or older, living with a disability that requires the use of a wheelchair, and currently residing in the U.S.) will receive a link to the full online survey.

Your Privacy Matters:

Participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

Have Questions? Please contact the research team at:

Email: travelX@iu.edu

Phone: 812-855-9037

The survey will close once researchers have reached the target number of completed responses.



Scan the QR to access the survey.

woman's empowerment

We were delighted to be joined by PVA National President Robert Thomas and the First Lady, who took time to connect with attendees and share in the joy of the event.

In total, 43 women veterans from PVA Chapters across the country attended the retreat, along with their caregivers. Each branch of the Armed Forces was represented, underscoring the diversity and unity of our shared experience. In the evenings, we gathered to talk, laugh, and remind one another that no matter how great our barriers may seem, we are never alone - and our rights and our voices matter.

It was my husband's and my first time visiting Minneapolis, and we were both deeply impressed by the city's warmth and hospitality. From the attentive staff to the outstanding organization, the retreat was an A+ experience from start to finish.

Many thanks to PVA National, the New England PVA, and all the sponsors who made this empowering and unforgettable experience possible.

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PVA Joins Virtual Roundtable with CFPB

Recently, PVA joined other veterans and military service organizations in a virtual roundtable with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Office of Servicemember Affairs (OSA). The OSA is the office tasked with helping servicemembers, veterans, and military families navigate the unique financial challenges of service by providing financial resources, monitoring complaints, and holding companies accountable. Topics discussed by various organizations included continued implementation of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, ensuring enforcement of the Military Lending Act, and continued monitoring of VA claims shark businesses.

PVA took the opportunity to encourage the OSA to provide strong oversight of student loan servicers; increase its partnership with the Department of Education, particularly around total and permanent disability (TPD) loan discharges; and address issues related to income driven repayment (IDR) plans and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program.

Ex. Director

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November gives us much to be thankful for - our members, our partners, and the ongoing opportunity to serve those who have given so much. On behalf of all of us at the New England Chapter, thank you for your continued support and commitment to our mission.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

www.pvanewengland.org

VA Secretary Urges Poor-Performing Medical Centers to "Do Better"

In August, VA reported that many of its hospitals received high marks as part of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 2025 hospital quality ratings. 77 percent of VA hospitals that received an Overall Hospital Quality Star Rating received 4 or 5 stars, and no VA hospitals received a one-star rating. Over 90 percent of the hospitals with ratings maintained or improved them compared to the previous year.

Less than a dozen saw their ratings slip and 26 facilities received two-star or three-star ratings, so there is room for improvement. Commenting on the ratings in August, VA Secretary Collins said, "Our job is to continue raising the bar for customer service and convenience throughout the department, so VA works better for the veterans, families, caregivers and survivors we are charged with serving." Recently, he gathered the leadership of VA's struggling facilities together and urged them to do better without additional resources or personnel.

"It's a matter of leadership," Collins told POLITICO, a Hill-based newspaper that covers policy and politics. "The answer for VA has always been just give us more money, give us more people to solve problems. And when you're dealing with some quality issues, and how you handle patient care, a lot of that is just simply whether you have the right processes in place." Although the Secretary didn't set a specific timeframe for improvement, it is clear he expects results. He is optimistic that many of the poorest performing sites could improve their ratings in just a year or two.

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2026 COLA Announced for Social Security Benefits

On October 24, the Social Security Administration announced that Social Security beneficiaries will receive a 2.8 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) starting in 2026. The increase is reflective of the effects of inflation. Military and federal employment retirement benefits will be raised by the same amount, but Congress has yet to approve the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment of 2025 (COLA) Act (S. 2392/H.R. 2138).

Once they do, VA's disability compensation programs would receive the same COLA.

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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Paralyzed Veterans of America
New England Chapter
1208 VFW Parkway, Suite 301
West Roxbury, MA 02132

tel: 617 942-8678
800 660-1181
fax: 857 203-9685

Email: info@pvanewengland.org

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



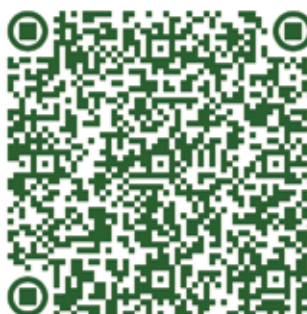
Paralyzed Veterans of America

New England Chapter



PVA Boccia Tournament Series - New England

**December 6-7, 2025
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