

A Year of Momentum — and a Future Full of Possibility

By Mark Murphy, Executive Director NEPVA

As we begin a new year, January offers a natural moment to pause, reflect, and look ahead. For our New England Chapter, 2025 was a year defined by growth, connection, and meaningful impact - and one that has positioned our Chapter strongly for the work ahead.

Over the past year, our mission was alive across New England. We welcomed new members from every state in our region, strengthened engagement among long-time members, and continued building a Chapter rooted in community, advocacy, and opportunity. Through adaptive sports, peer connection, and outreach, veterans were not only served — they were empowered. 2025 was also a standout year for legislative advocacy. Our Capitol Hill visit last June was widely regarded as our strongest and most productive in recent memory. It was incredibly well organized as Chapter members, Board leaders, volunteers, and staff came together to ensure that the voices of paralyzed veterans were heard on issues that matter most:



healthcare access, caregiver support, benefits protection, and disability rights. These efforts extended beyond Washington, as we continued close collaboration with VA medical centers and policymakers throughout New England to improve care and accessibility at home.

Our adaptive sports and recreation programs once again proved to be a cornerstone of our Chapter. From bocchia and curling

to adaptive skiing and golf, members found opportunities to challenge themselves, build confidence, and form lasting connections. We were proud to send more than two dozen Chapter members and volunteers to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and to host programs that foster both independence and camaraderie.

Being recognized by PVA National with the Stanley D. Brown Most Improved Chapter Award was a powerful affirmation of this collective effort and the direction we are headed.

Behind every successful program is strong stewardship, and 2025 reflected that as well. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, sponsors, and partners - including The Boston Foundation and Dedham Savings Bank - our Chapter continued to grow financially and operationally. That stability allowed us to expand programs, strengthen communications, and deepen our impact across the region. Being recognized by PVA National with the Stanley D. Brown Most Improved Chapter Award was a powerful affirmation of this collective effort and the direction we are headed.

As proud as we are of what we accomplished in 2025, we are even more energized by what lies ahead. In 2026, we look forward to expanding adaptive sports opportunities, strengthening

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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 settle into a new year, I find myself both grateful for where we have been and energized by where we are going as a Chapter. We closed out 2025 in the best possible way - together. Our Chapter Christmas Party last month was a wonderful reminder of what makes New England PVA so special. It was not just a celebration of the holidays; it was a celebration of community. Seeing members, volunteers, VA staff and friends gathered together - sharing stories, laughter, and gratitude - reinforced for me that the heart of this organization is, and always will be, our people.

As I write this, I am also looking ahead with excitement to our upcoming Winter Sports Clinic at Mt. Sunapee, one of our most anticipated and longest-running events that we are delighted to support. Events like this capture the spirit of what we strive to offer every day: opportunity, challenge, independence, and camaraderie. Be sure to look for photos and a full recap in next month's edition - it is always a highlight of our winter season.

You will also find another article from me in this issue reflecting more deeply on 2025 as a year in review. I will not repeat all of that here, but I will say this: the progress we made last year did not happen by accident. It was the result of thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, engaged members, and a shared commitment to excellence in everything we do. That same energy is already carrying us forward into 2026.



Planning is well underway for the year ahead, and there is much to be excited about. We are continuing and expanding many of our core programs - from advocacy and adaptive sports to outreach and communications - while also building on newer initiatives that have been especially well received. Chief among them is Project 72,000 Square Miles, our innovative new Chapter program designed to strengthen our presence, deepen engagement, and better serve members across the full geographic footprint of New England. The response to this program has been incredibly encouraging, and we are excited to continue developing it in the months ahead.

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The year ahead will bring new opportunities, new challenges, and new ways to show up for one another. What gives me confidence is knowing that we face it all together - as a Chapter that is engaged, forward-looking, and deeply committed to our mission.

Thank you for your continued involvement, support, and trust. I look forward to seeing many of you at events in the months ahead and to sharing another year of progress, advocacy, and community.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

New Year celebration at the West Roxbury VA.

Washington Update

PVA National Treasurer Testifies in HVAC Hearing on Key Benefits Legislation

On December 3, the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC) held a legislative hearing to examine H.R. 6047, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act, and H.R. 4077, the GUARD Veterans’ Health Care Act. H.R. 6047 would increase the amount of Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) for the most severely disabled veterans. It would also raise VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) rates for the surviving family members of deceased servicemembers and disabled veterans. H.R. 4077 would allow the VA to recover from Medicare Advantage and Medicare prescription drug plans part of the cost of care or services furnished to veterans enrolled in Medicare.

PVA National Treasurer Tom Wheaton represented the organization at the witness table and most of his oral and written testimonies focused on the benefits bill. Even with additional financial support, many of our most severely disabled veterans are still struggling. Mr. Wheaton told the committee that catastrophically disabled veterans often spend more on daily home-based care and other disability-related needs than they receive in SMC, which creates a tremendous financial strain on them. He cited several reasons why the increase was needed, including the need to hire help for basic home ownership costs and increased travel costs.

Mr. Wheaton reminded the committee that SMC is intended to assist veterans with the higher costs of living that disabled veterans experience, but its baseline rates haven’t been raised in so long that it isn’t helping as many veterans as Congress intended. PVA supports language in H.R. 6047 that would increase the rates of SMC R1, R2, and T by \$10,000 annually.

Finally, Mr. Wheaton talked about his family and his desire to ensure their financial security in the future. Veterans on fixed incomes face tremendous difficulty trying to save even a small nest egg for their survivors, who often sacrificed their own lives to care for the veteran. H.R. 6047 would increase DIC’s base amount by one percent every year for five years.

Testifying in addition to Mr. Wheaton were Sharri Briley, surviving spouse of CW3 Donovan “Bull” Briley, and Edgar Edmundson, father of Sgt (Ret.) Eric Edmundson, whom the bill was named after. There was intense discussion during the Q&A session about how to pay for the bill. As a result of concerns raised about the originally proposed way to pay for the benefit increases, the committee leadership is currently working on alternative solutions. The committee will likely come together again to mark up the bill in the new year, but an exact date has not been set yet.

VA Announces Major VHA Reorganization

On December 15, VA Secretary Doug Collins announced a significant reorganization to the structure of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). According to a VA press release announcing the reorganization, VHA Central Office will have responsibility for setting policy goals and conducting financial management, oversight and compliance. Operations Centers and Veterans Integrated Service Networks will take policy direction from VHA’s Central Office to develop operational, quality, and performance standards that will guide VA’s more than 1,300 medical facilities. The release states that staffing and operations at VA medical centers and clinics will not be changing as part of this reorganization.

Following the announcement, PVA CEO Carl Blake released a statement noting PVA’s concern for administrative bloat that has hindered health care decision-making and made it difficult for VHA to hire the staff needed to deliver health care services more effectively. He offered our support for steps that will eliminate, or at least significantly reduce, unnecessary barriers. We are hopeful that the reorganization will result in increased accountability and resolve ongoing clinical staffing challenges.

From the President’s Desk

by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President

Dear Friends,

The first month of the new year has already come and gone, and while we’re fully underway in 2026, I still find myself reflecting often on everything we accomplished together in 2025. It truly was a year of growth for our Chapter - not only in the programs we delivered, but in the strength of our community and the connections we continue to build across New England. I want to begin by saying how deeply grateful I am to our volunteers.

The dedication, time, and energy you give to this Chapter makes everything we do possible. Whether you’re helping behind the scenes, supporting events, offering encouragement to fellow members, or representing the Chapter out in the community - your commitment matters, and it makes a real difference.

We also ended last year on a wonderful note with our Chapter Christmas Party in December, and I want to thank everyone who joined us. It was a fantastic evening and a great reminder of how important it is to gather, celebrate, and simply enjoy each other’s company. Our Chapter is more than programs and meetings - it’s a community, and

that spirit was on full display that night.

Now, as we look ahead, it’s exciting to begin a fresh year with so much already on the horizon. We have many great events returning this year, along with some new programs that we’ll be announcing as plans come together. And of course, one of the biggest highlights for our Chapter every year is our Annual Golf Tournament — an event we always look forward to and one that continues to be an exciting and important tradition for NEPVA.

One of the early highlights of the year was the Winter Sports Clinic at Mt. Sunapee. Mark Murphy and I had the chance to attend the banquet, say hello to members, and present a check in support of this outstanding program. Our Chapter is always proud to sponsor this event, and it’s incredible to see how much it continues to grow each year. The clinic is run by true professionals, and it’s a great time for everyone involved. This year, the addition of a rock wall for the first time was a huge hit - and of course, there was plenty more happening throughout the week, including

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Chapter Christmas Party camaraderie.

Enjoy the Winter with Northeast Passage

ADAPTIVE ICE SKATING - Portsmouth, NH

NEP is pleased to continue our partnership with Puddle Dock Pond in Portsmouth, NH to offer outdoor adaptive ice skating on Wednesday afternoons. Free admission for individuals with disabilities and one care provider (if applicable).

Dates:

Wednesdays from 12:30-2:00 PM

January 21, January 28,

February 4, February 11, February 18

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.*

There is no fee for these NEP adaptive events.

These events are weather dependent. We will keep registered participants informed of any changes in scheduled events.

Figure and Hockey Skate rentals available onsite for \$6.00 (up to size 14). Rental fees will be waived for NEP participants. NEP has a limited selection of sit ice sleds available for shared use amongst interested individuals. Modified hockey sticks with sharp picks on the bottom are used to propel yourself around the ice.

Push bars are available for most of these sleds so that someone can assist with movement and control on the ice. If you require a pusher on the ice, pushers **MUST** wear ice skates while on the ice. If you anticipate needing NEP to provide an on-ice pusher for you, please let us know upon registration. For online registration, this can be done in the Equipment Requested field.

NEP staff will be available to provide moderate assistance with transfers in and out of adaptive equipment, and on/off the ice. If you anticipate needing more than moderate assistance, please contact NEP to discuss your needs, or bring a companion with you to assist. If you have questions about this, please contact Northeast Passage.

INTRODUCTION TO SLED HOCKEY

HOMER CUP SLED HOCKEY INTRO CLINIC - Durham, NH

You've heard the hype! Now come experience sled hockey in a supportive, introductory environment. Learn from Northeast Passage's experienced coaches and players and get a feel for the sport.

Participants will use Northeast Passage sled hockey equipment (or bring your own) and skate at the Whittemore Center Arena at the University of New Hampshire as part of NEP's Homer Cup.



This clinic is appropriate for aspiring sled hockey players of all ages. We're hoping to see youth players and adults on the ice. You don't need prior hockey experience—just a willingness to give it a try. Players will see what it's like to move, pass, and shoot in this fast-moving team sport.

Sunday, February 8, 2026

10:30AM - 12:00PM (on ice time: 11-12)

Whittemore Center Arena, Durham, NH

Pre-registration is required – There is no cost for this event

TO REGISTER: Pre-registration is required. Please contact Northeast Passage at 603-862-0070

SEE OUR FEBRUARY ISSUE FOR A FULL REPORT ON THE WINTER SPORTS CLINIC





EVENT SCHEDULE

FY26

January 2026		
PVA Wheelchair Rugby Invitational	January 30-February 1, 2026	Louisville, KY
February 2026		
PVA Boccia 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 Boccia 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
June 2026		
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Capital Clash	June 5-7, 2026	Marbury, MD
PVA Wheelchair Basketball Camp	June 8-14, 2026	Arlington, TX

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or call (510) 984-1761 option 1



A recently revised VA policy allows Ekso Indego to be issued to qualified veterans at no cost.

* For full indications for use, visit: www.eksobionics.com/indications-for-use/



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PN#:044-028-001 Rev. C

Service Officers Report

by Zachary T. Nuetzel
National Service Officer

Hello NEPVA. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. I wanted to follow up from the recent group of articles that have been focused on options for denied claims.

In the previous article we had discussed appealing a decision to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). I wanted to continue the series with what options may be considered if you disagree with the decision of the BVA. More specifically, I wanted to discuss the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC).

After the BVA, the next higher location it can be argued is with the CAVC. The CAVC is a federal court that provides veteran's and their families with a venue to continue an appeal after a final adjudication from the BVA. In order for an appeal to be submitted to the CAVC, certain criteria must be met. This article will cover what the CAVC is, the steps for filing an appeal, and a brief overview of the court process.

The Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims was established by congress in 1988 and is codified in law under 38 U.S.C. 7251 through 7292. The enactment of the CAVC allows veterans to appeal board denials to a location outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The CAVC is a federal court. This court holds a jurisdiction over BVA appeals. When claims go to the CAVC, the veteran's law judge is supposed to make a determination on whether the BVA correctly applied the law when applied to the

case with respect to the facts of the specific case. What this means is that the CAVC will not consider any new evidence to make a decision on the case. The CAVC will only review evidence that is of record at the time of the board decision. Since this appeal is an argument disagreeing with a BVA decision strong arguments with an understanding of the relevant laws are typically essential.

If a veteran receives a decision from the BVA and they disagree, there are steps that need to be taken in order for this to be seen before the CAVC. In order to apply to the CAVC a veteran must:

- 1) **Have a final decision from the BVA (not a VA regional office)**
- 2) **Submit a written notice of appeal (NOA) (Form 1) that includes the claimants name, address, phone number, email, claims file number, and the date of the BVA decision being appealed.**
- 3) **The court must receive the NOA no later than 120 days after the date on which the board mailed the notice of decision to the appellant.**

The address, fax and email address for where the NOA can be filed to can be found on uscourts.cavc.gov.

In order to file, an appellant must also submit a \$50.00 nonrefundable filing fee unless they are eligible to receive an exemption due to filing a declaration of financial relief (Form 4a). Once this is filed the CAVC goes through a process to make a decision.

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*...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.*

A brief overview of the CAVC process is as follows. The BVA makes a decision that an appellant disagrees with. The Appellant files a NOA and filing fee and CAVC receives them within 120 days of the mailing of the BVA decision. After, the clerk sends a notice of docketing along with the courts case number and instructions for both parties. The Notice of docketing instructs the secretary to file with the court a copy of the BVA decision and provide a copy to the appellant. The secretary then must provide a copy of all information that was part of the record before the BVA on the date of the BVA decision. If the appellant disagrees with the information that the BVA appealed, they may dispute the record within 19 days (this is for if there is evidence missing from the record). Once the record is established, the appellant will be instructed to file their argument (brief). After the appellants brief, the VA will submit their brief and following that, the appellant can provide a response to the secretary. The secretary will then provide a collection of the information used to decide the appeal. Finally, if there is no dispute of the collection, the case will be decided by the judge(s). Once the judge makes a decision, the appellant may ask for reconsideration after the judge's decision becomes final. At this point, the appellant may either agree with the decision or would have to file to a higher court (CAFC).

This is just a brief overview of the CAVC and the process that occurs when an appellant disagrees with a BVA decision. Since this is often a complex and complicated process that requires arguments encompassing application of laws, it is recommended that any claimant consult with their local service officer to discuss.

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA – REGIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

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BBB Rating: A+

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.

House Oversight Hearing on Chapter 35 Education Benefits

On December 16, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held an oversight hearing focused on VA's failure to issue Chapter 35 benefits to more than 70,000 beneficiaries.

The hearing titled, "Detrimental Delays: Reviewing Payment Failures in VA's Education Programs," included witnesses from the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and Accenture Federal Services, the contractor that oversees the Digital GI Bill (DGIB) modernization efforts. There was also a second panel where the only veteran organization to testify was the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS).

The VA said the issue stemmed from an IT failure as it migrated beneficiaries from their legacy Benefits Delivery Network (BDN) to the DGIB in August of this year. VA identified several factors for the failure in processing the benefits that included manual reconciliation between the two platforms, compressed testing timelines, a lack of enterprise governance, and an increase in claims volume. The issue was then exacerbated by the government shutdown. VA says appropriate steps have been taken to address the mistake and a plan is in place to prevent it from happening in the future.

Accenture, the contractor overseeing the DGIB phased roll out, stressed that what happened with the Chapter 35 payments was not a technical glitch. Accenture informed the subcommittee that a requirement carried over from 2024 obligated a manual one-time validation, or reconciliation, of BDN data for all claims migrated over to the DGIB platform, which takes longer than VA projected.

TAPS shared the experiences of their community and the significant hardship faced by the dependents and survivors that reached out for assistance. The testimony shared by TAPS highlighted missed tuition deadlines, families forced to borrow to cover costs, and schools that were left without any information or guidance due to VA's education workforce being furloughed.

The hearing closed with members saying this wasn't the end of the conversation and that additional hearings would be held about preventing something like this from happening again. If you or your family experienced delays of Chapter 35 payments that have yet to be resolved, you can email Julie Howell, Associate Legislative Director, at JulieH@PVA.org.

PVA Testifies in SVAC Legislation Hearing

On December 10, PVA testified at a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) hearing to examine 24 veterans-related pieces of legislation. Over half of the bills addressed VA health care or disability claims matters, while the remainder addressed burial, education, or VA policy issues. In his oral statement, PVA National Legislative Director Morgan Brown focused on three bills that would have the greatest impact on our members.

First, Mr. Brown spoke in favor of S. 1657, the Review Every Veteran's Claim Act, which seeks to limit the VA's authority to deny a veteran's claim solely based on the veteran's failure to appear for a medical examination associated with the claim. Thousands of veterans' claims for service connection, claims for increase, and for other benefits like Total Disability Individual Unemployability and Aid and Attendance have been denied solely because of missing an examination. He informed the committee that there are many legitimate reasons why our members may not be able to attend a scheduled exam. We are also aware of numerous instances where VA contractors erroneously record the veteran as a "no show." We believe that passage of this legislation will ensure that a missed exam isn't the only basis for denying a veteran's claim. Mr. Brown also told the committee that VA should carefully consider whether an examination is even needed, since many veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) already receive most of their care through the department's SCI/D system of care.

Next, he talked about S. 1992, the Veterans Appeals Efficiency Act, which would establish additional reporting and tracking requirements for the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Board of Veterans' Appeals, such as information on Higher Level Reviews, Supplemental Claims, and Notices of Disagreement. It also requires the tracking of claims pending in the National Work Queue, not assigned to an adjudicator; cases that are remanded by the Board; Veteran Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act cases pending a hearing; and when a decisionmaker did not comply with the Board's decision.

We recognize the value of and support efforts to track meaningful data to improve the effectiveness and accuracy of the claims process. However, the data sought by this legislation will be meaningless unless VA addresses the problems that hinder their ability to obtain proper medical opinions, since this continues to result in remandable errors.

He also noted that the Veterans Appeals Efficiency Act would give the Board the authority to aggregate certain claims. While PVA does not oppose allowing the Board to aggregate appeals involving common questions of law or fact, we believe that before that can be done a feasibility study should be conducted, and the findings reviewed. Then, legislation based on those findings could be brought forth.

Finally, Mr. Brown noted that in times of fiscal constraint, joint use agreements between the Department of Defense (DOD) and the VA should be highly prized for their ability to increase access to care for servicemembers and veterans while reducing overall federal spending. Such agreements allow for the sharing of medical personnel, facilities, and resources which can lead to faster access to high quality care and improved medical outcomes. They also reduce bureaucracy and improve the efficiency of the system. DOD and VA have had the authority to execute these types of agreements for decades but have never used them to their full potential. Mr. Brown provided PVA's support for a draft bill, the SERVE Act, which reinforces the authority and will improve access to healthcare by improving collaboration between the two departments.

During the Q&A session, he was asked to speak about S. 668, the SAFE STEPS for Veterans Act, which PVA supports. Given the tremendous cost to the government of care related to falls, as well as the individual, and because half of the estimated 16.5 million living veterans are over 65, he told the committee it makes sense to reorient existing VA fall prevention programs towards a more proactive posture. A complete list of the bills examined, the video, and relevant documents for the hearing can be found [here](#)



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VA Officials Warn of New Scam Targeting Veterans

VA recently sounded the alarm about a new scam targeting veterans, surviving spouses, and family members who receive VA benefits. The scammers pretend to be VA representatives collecting an overpayment of VA benefits. They are using official looking letters, emails, and texts that often include fake VA logos and letterhead, making it extremely difficult to distinguish from genuine VA communications. If you receive a letter or any communication about a VA benefits overpayment, log into your official VA.gov account immediately to verify if you truly owe money.

If you find you do owe money, VA's Debt Management Center offers many repayment options. Also, be aware that VA will not call you about potential overpayments unless you initiated the inquiry first. You can learn more about the scam and ways to protect yourself [here](#).



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

cover story

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member engagement, and continuing to elevate our advocacy efforts at both the national and regional levels. We will build on the relationships we've forged with VA partners, legislators, and community organizations, while remaining focused on what matters most: ensuring that no veteran with a spinal cord injury or disease is left behind.

None of this work happens alone. Our progress is made possible by the dedication of our members, volunteers, Board, staff, caregivers, donors, and partners. Together, we are creating a Chapter that is strong, responsive, and ready for the future. Thank you for being part of this mission - and for helping make 2026 a year of even greater impact.

President's report

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sled hockey and other activities. Our Sports Director, Mike Moran, will have more coverage next month, including a barrage of photos you won't want to miss.

Looking ahead, Mark and I will also be attending the PVA National Board of Directors Annual Convention meeting in May, and I'll be sure to share more about that in next month's newsletter. That's all for now — but there's plenty ahead, and even more to come. We've got a lot to do out there, and I hope you'll join us. Come have fun, stay connected, and enjoy your Chapter.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson
Chapter President & National Director

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Paralyzed Veterans of America

New England Chapter

**VISIT THE CHAPTER WEBSITE
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NEWS AND EVENTS**