

## 80th Annual PVA Convention Brings National Leadership Together in Las Vegas

By Mark Murphy, Executive Director NEPVA

Last week, representatives from our New England Chapter traveled to Las Vegas to attend the 80th Annual PVA Convention. I joined Chapter President and National Director Brad Carlson, along with Kathy Carlson, for several days of meetings, organizational business, and collaboration with PVA leaders from across the country. The Annual Convention remains one of the most important events on the PVA calendar, bringing together National Directors, Chapter leaders, staff, and members to help shape the future direction of the organization. Throughout the week, delegates participated in committee meetings, leadership discussions, elections, and policy conversations focused on the future of PVA and the veterans we serve.

For our New England Chapter, the Conven-

tion provided an important opportunity to connect directly with national leadership and fellow chapters while ensuring that the voices and perspectives of veterans from across New England continue to be represented at the national level. Discussions throughout the week focused on a wide range of issues impacting veterans living with spinal cord injuries and diseases, including healthcare access, benefits, ad-

*The Convention also served as a reminder of the strength and history of PVA as the organization marks its 80th year of service and advocacy.*

vocacy priorities, membership engagement, adaptive sports, chapter operations, and the long-term structure and governance of the organization. In addition to attending Convention sessions and meetings, our Chapter was proud to place a full-page advertisement in the official Convention Journal, highlighting our Chapter's ongoing work and outreach efforts throughout all 6 New England states. The ad showcased our commitment to advocacy, recreation, public awareness, and direct member engagement across the region.

One of the most valuable aspects of Convention each year is the opportunity to strengthen relationships with other chapters from around the country. Conversations that happen outside the formal meeting rooms often lead to new ideas, shared strategies, and collaborations that ultimately benefit veterans at the local level. As PVA continues to evolve and address new challenges facing veterans and nonprofit organizations alike, these relationships remain critically important.

The Convention also served as a reminder of the strength and history of PVA as the organization marks its 80th year of service and advocacy. Since its founding by injured World War II veterans in 1946, PVA has played a leading role nationally in advancing healthcare, accessibility,

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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 move into the summer months, our New England Chapter continues to remain active on multiple fronts - national leadership, advocacy, outreach, and fundraising - all in support of the veterans and families we proudly serve across the region.

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend the 80th Annual PVA Convention in Las Vegas alongside our Chapter President and National Director Brad Carlson, as well as Kathy Carlson. The Convention brought together PVA leadership, chapter representatives, staff, and members from across the country for several days of meetings, organizational business, elections, and strategic discussions focused on the future of PVA and the veterans we represent. One of the most valuable aspects of attending the Convention each year is the opportunity to collaborate directly with other chapters and national leadership. These conversations allow us to share ideas, discuss challenges, and strengthen relationships that ultimately benefit our members here in New England. As PVA marks its 80th year, it was also a power-

ful reminder of the organization's long history of advocacy and service to veterans living with spinal cord injuries and diseases.

Looking ahead, our attention now turns toward the upcoming PVA Advocacy and Legislation Seminar in Washington, DC next month. Brad Carlson, Kathy Carlson, Board Member Ericka Haddad, and I will be representing the Chapter as we meet with Members of Congress from across all 6 New England states. The seminar is one of the most important advocacy events of the year and provides an opportunity for chapters from across the country to come together around legislative priorities impacting veterans and individuals with disabilities. Our delegation will participate in policy briefings and meetings on Capitol Hill focused on issues including VA healthcare, accessibility, disability rights, caregiver support, and services for veterans living with spinal cord injuries and diseases. Advocacy remains central to PVA's mission, and it is important that the voices of New England veterans continue to be heard directly by lawmakers in Washington.

At the same time, planning is moving full speed ahead for our Annual Golf Tournament, which will be held on August 17th at South Shore Country Club in Hingham, Massachusetts. This event continues to be one of the Chapter's premier annual fundraisers and an important opportunity to bring together members, supporters, sponsors, and community partners in support of our mission.

Registration is now open through our tournament website, and our Golf Committee has been hard at work coordinating sponsorships, event logistics, player recruitment, and raffle and auction planning. We are incredibly grateful for the support we continue to receive from individuals, businesses, and volunteers who help make this event possible year after year.



Our Chapter placed a full page ad in the convention program, we think it really stood out and represented NEPVA well.

## New England PVA Leaders Participate in Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Summit

By Mark Murphy, Executive Director

The New England PVA was proud to have 2 members of our Board of Directors, Vice President Mike Moran and Director Keelan Zenion, participate as speakers at this year's Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Summit in Boston.

The Reeve Summit brought together healthcare professionals, advocates, researchers, caregivers, nonprofit leaders, and individuals living with paralysis for a day focused on accessibility, innovation, community resources, advocacy, and improving quality of life for individuals living with spinal cord injuries and related disabilities. The event highlighted the importance of collaboration between organizations, healthcare systems, and people with lived experience in helping individuals navigate life after injury.

Mike and Keelan participated in discussions centered on the real-world experiences of individuals living with paralysis and the importance of peer support, advocacy, independence, and community connection. Their participation reflected the mission and values of the New England

PVA by ensuring that the voices of veterans and individuals with lived experience remain at the center of conversations surrounding accessibility, rehabilitation, and long-term support systems. Both Mike and Keelan brought unique perspectives shaped by their own experiences, leadership, and ongoing involvement within the disability community. Their contributions emphasized not only the challenges individuals may face following spinal cord injury, but also the opportunities that exist through adaptive sports, peer mentorship, advocacy, employment, recreation, and community engagement.

The Summit also provided an opportunity for organizations throughout the region to strengthen partnerships and share ideas related to healthcare access, adaptive technology, caregiving resources, transportation, housing, and independent living initiatives. Events like these are an important reminder that improving quality of life for individuals living with paralysis requires not only medical care, but long-term investment in accessibility, inclusion, and community support.

Our New England Chapter is grateful to Mike and Keelan for representing our organization and for continuing to advocate on behalf of veterans and all individuals living with spinal cord injuries and diseases throughout New England. Their participation at the Reeve Summit reflects the leadership, experience, and commitment that continue to strengthen our Chapter and the communities we serve.

*Vice President Mike Moran and Director Keelan Zenion, participate as speakers at this year's Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Summit in Boston.*

**Mike & Keelan's participation reflected the mission and values of the New England PVA by ensuring that the voices of veterans and individuals with lived experience remain at the center of conversations surrounding accessibility, rehabilitation, and long-term support systems.**



## From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson  
NEPVA President

Hello Everyone,

I guess spring has officially sprung. The grass is green, the flowers are blooming, and as my wife likes to say, "Where are all the birds?" I always get a laugh out of that one, so I figured it was a good way to start this month's article.

I'm writing this on the eve of our May Board meeting and am happy to be back home after attending the National PVA Convention in Las Vegas. Executive Director Mark Murphy and I spent the week participating in meetings and discussions that gave us a great deal of insight into where PVA National stands heading into the coming year. During Convention, the PVA National budget was approved by the Board of Directors, several bylaws and policies were updated, and national officers were installed. Overall, it was a very smooth and straightforward election process. As I like to say, "If it's not broken, don't fix it." We continue to have very experienced and highly qualified national staff and executive leadership team. Throughout the week, national executives and department leaders shared updates on their work and outlined plans and priorities for the future. While



Convention always makes for a long week of meetings, we returned home with valuable knowledge and information that helps strengthen our Chapter and better serve our members. One topic that once again came up during Convention discussions was the possibility of eventually creating a New York Chapter. This is something I first raised several years ago after becoming Chapter President. PVA continues to support the concept, but there are still many discussions and logistical considerations that need to take place. It is a complex issue involving multiple chapters and many moving parts, but it is not outside the reach of our Chapter to help coordinate and support efforts moving forward. We currently have 67 Chapter members in New York, so it remains something I will continue to stay involved in and pursue in the years ahead.

Next on our schedule is the PVA Advocacy and Legislation Seminar (ADLEG) in Washington, DC. Joining me this year will be Executive Director Mark Murphy, Chapter Treasurer Ericka Haddad, and Kathy Carlson. Every year we bring a different Board member to participate so they can better understand the legislative and lobbying process and help advocate directly for veterans and the disability community on Capitol Hill. It is one of the most important things we do as an organization.

After Washington, our attention quickly turns toward the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in July. For everyone who has signed up to attend, we have been working hard on hotel arrangements and accommodations, and by now most participants should have received their room confirmations. Joanie Lynch, Kathy Carlson, and I have spent a great deal of time coordinating with the team at PVA in Washington to help ensure everyone is comfortable and taken care of during the trip. Now it's time to get ready for what is always one of the greatest events of the year. I hope



## Overview of PVA Priority Legislation in Preparation for Advocacy/Legislation Seminar in June

PVA's 2026 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar is barely three weeks away! Nearly two dozen bills have been introduced in the 119th Congress that directly correlate with our legislative priorities. On May 7, PVA's Government Relations Team briefed attendees on many key legislative priorities that could come up during their Hill visits. Below are the bills that we addressed that are PVA priorities but that likely won't be in line for action in June. We will address the key bills that are likely to see action later in May.

**H.R. 2055/S. 611, the Caring for Survivors Act.** This legislation would increase the amount paid in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, or DIC, to 55 percent of the total compensation paid to the surviving spouse of a totally disabled veteran. It also shortens the DIC waiting period from 10 years to 5 years with a graduated scale.

**H.R. 2102/S. 1032, the Major Richard Star Act.** There are approximately 50,000 medically retired, combat injured veterans subject to retirement offset from their VA disability payments. This legislation would allow those veterans who are Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) eligible to receive concurrent receipt, or their full military retirement and their full VA disability payment.

**H.R. 1288/S. 599, the Driver Reimbursement Increase for Veteran Equity (DRIVE) Act.** The DRIVE Act would increase the VA reimbursement rate for mileage and other travel expenses. The current rate is \$0.41 and this legislation would raise it to \$0.70. It would also tie future increases to what federal employees receive for mileage reimbursement.

**H.R. 2036/S. 925, the Credit for Caring Act.** The Credit for Caring Act would create a new, nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$5,000 for working family caregivers to help address the significant financial impact of caregiving.

**H.R. 8490/S. 4396, the Social Security Caregiver Credit Act.** This legislation would allow eligible caregivers to earn Social Security credits for up to five years while providing unpaid care to a dependent child under 12, an aging parent, a spouse, or a family member with a disability. Participation in the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers would not affect eligibility for earning credits.

**H.R. 2576/S. 1245, the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act.** This bill would expand evidentiary support for the survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST), modernize language for a digital age, allow non-Department of Defense evidence to support a claim, authorize Guard and Reservists to access VA mental health support, and allow a veteran to request their compensation and pension exam be done by a VA provider.

**H.R. 2245/S. 1644, the Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act and H.R. 3309, the Autonomy for All Disabled Veterans Act.** These bills would increase the grant amount for VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant program. They would also tie the grant to an inflationary index, so the amount will increase automatically without needing congressional approval.

**H.R. 220, the Veterans Infertility Treatment Act.** This measure would increase access to infertility care, including assisted reproductive technology, such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), in VA's medical benefits package. It would also eliminate the need to prove direct service connection for infertility, as well as codifying recent changes authorizing the use of donated genetic material.

**H.R. 7411/S. 3395, the Mammography Access for Veteran's Act of 2025.** This legislation builds off the success of the MAMMO Act (P.L. 117-135), by permanently authorizing the mammography telescreening pilot program. It also would require VA to offer either a telescreening mammography program, a full-service in-house mammography program, or a mobile mammography program in each state.

You can find additional information on these bills and many others by visiting PVAAction Force. Even if you're not joining us in Washington, D.C. for this year's Advocacy/Legislation Seminar, you can still participate by using this site to send messages to your elected officials, urging them to support these bills.

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

## NorthEast Passage Adaptive Sports & Recreation Summer Schedule Cycling – 2 Locations

### PORTSMOUTH

Join Northeast Passage and enjoy some beautiful trail cycling on the Seacoast of NH. Our staff will get cyclists fitted onto a NEP cycle or you can bring your own. The section of the rail trail we are using is hard-packed gravel and is a great trail for ALL riders!

**DATES:** May 27, June 3, July 1, July 8, August 5, August 12 from 1:00-3:00PM

### WINDHAM

Come join Northeast Passage for a weekday afternoon ride on a picturesque trail in Windham, NH. Bring your own cycle or use one of ours and ride along a 7 mile (round-trip) paved trail.

**DATES:** June 10, July 15, July 29, August 19, August 26 from 1:00-3:00 PM

**TANDEM OPTIONS--**If you are requesting a tandem cycle, please CALL the Northeast Passage office (603) 862-0070, to register. Due to limited tandem options, this is the best way to ensure the cycle you need is available. NEP cannot provide staff to be a tandem rider, you must bring your own companion rider if you need to ride tandem.

\*\*Due to limited capacity and high demand for cycling opportunities, we are asking participants to register for 3 cycling rides this summer and Wait List for the remaining options. If you have questions, please call the office (603) 862-0070\*\*  
Fees: \$30 w/ NEP Cycle, \$5 w/own cycle per event.

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

### Outdoor Archery – Allenstown, New Hampshire

Come enjoy the early summer with us while we make some arrows fly on an outdoor archery course! This range is wheelchair accessible via a paved path from the parking lot to the range which is hard packed/dirt, there are some grassy areas but there is also a paved path to multiple targets that can be beneficial to wheelchair users.

Equipment and instruction provided by Northeast Passage staff and volunteers. Participants are permitted to register for two events and waitlist for the remaining two. If you anticipate using one of our Draw-Lock bows, please state that in your registration as we are limited to two Draw-Lock archers per event.

**DATES:** Tuesdays, June 2, June 9, June 16, June 30 from 12-2:00pm  
Fee: \$20/per event

### Wheelchair Lacrosse – Rochester, New Hampshire

No experience required! We are continuing to develop our skills and work on fundamentals and would love to have you join us for an introductory experience.

Wheelchair lacrosse is played on a roller hockey rink using a no-bounce ball and the same sport wheelchairs that are typically used for wheelchair basketball. Players use their lacrosse sticks to scoop, catch, carry, pass, and shoot the ball into the other team's goal. Gameplay is 6 vs 6 (plus a goalie), and players can change positions on the fly.

All necessary equipment will be provided including court chairs, lacrosse sticks, and protective gear such as helmets, gloves, shoulder pads, and elbow pads.

**DATES:** Thursdays, 6/4, 7/9, 7/16, 7/23, 7/30 from 5:30-6:30pm

Our competitive team practice immediately follows the intro session. There is no cost for these events.

**Pre-registration is required for all programs. Please contact Northeast Passage at 603-862-0070 or [northeast.passage@unh.edu](mailto:northeast.passage@unh.edu)**



# EVENT SCHEDULE

## FY26

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
June 2026		
PVA Bass Tournament Series: Capital Clash	June 5-7, 2026	Marbury, MD
PVA Wheelchair Basketball Camp	June 8-14, 2026	Arlington, TX
PVA Trapshooting Tournament Series: Wisconsin	June 12-14, 2026	Green Bay, WI
PVA Outdoor Experience: Teton	June 22-26, 2026	Jackson Hole, WY
PVA Bowling Tournament Series: National Championship	June 25-28, 2026	Omaha, NE
PVA Trapshooting Tournament Series: Iowa (Year-End)	June 26-28, 2026	Cedar Rapids, IA
July 2026		
National Veterans Wheelchair Games	July 9-14, 2026	Detroit, MI

### 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. Benefits include improved cardiovascular health, cognitive improvements, increased strength and endurance, improved stress management, and mental health relief.

**FITNESS+ WELLNESS PROGRAM**  
POWERED BY WARRIOR STRONG

**REGISTER TODAY!**

PVA.org/Sports ParalyzedVeterans PVA1946

### Veterans Fishing Tournament in CT

The Veterans Fishing Tournaments are open water bass tournaments for veterans or service members with a permanent physical disability, visual impairment or PTSD. Tournaments are held in May on Candlewood Lake in Danbury, CT or in September on Lake Congamond in Southwick, MA. Each veteran will be paired with an experienced angler and boat captain for a day on the water. The tournament includes all fishing equipment, a weigh-in and an awards luncheon. Prizes are awarded for the top 3 weights.

This event is organized in collaboration with the Major Steven “Roy” Andrews Fishing Outreach Program and CT Bass Nation.

This program is funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of Veteran Affairs in partnership with Move United Warfighter Sports Program and is offered at **NO COST for veterans.**

**CONGAMOND LAKE**  
Date: Tuesday, September 22, 2026

Location: Congamond Lake, Southwick, MA

Time: 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Check-in: 7:00 a.m. – 7:15 a.m.

Fish: 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Weigh-In: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Awards and Lunch: 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Registration Information for Congamond available in July 2026



### Gaylord Veteran Adaptive Sports

The Sports Association Veteran Adaptive Sports Series (SAVES) is designated adaptive sports programming for veterans who have a physical disability or visual impairment.

Programs have included;

- \* Kayaking
- \* Fishing
- \* Water Skiing
- \* Adaptive Cycling
- \* Archery
- \* Yoga
- \* Golf
- \* Bowling

## Service Officers Report

### SCI Hubs and Spokes:

Hello, NEPVA. I hope everyone has been enjoying the warmer weather that we are having. For this article, I wanted to provide some information regarding the VA Spinal Cord Injury and Disorder System of Care. More specifically, I wanted to discuss the VA system of Hubs and Spokes.

The official establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs stems from an executive order in 1930. 15 years later, the first Spinal Cord Injury Center was established at the Long Beach VA medical center. Shortly after the establishment of the SCI center in Long Beach, in 1948, the VA established additional medical centers in New York, Tennessee, Virginia, and Illinois. Today, the VA has the largest SCI/D system of care in the United States. The expansion to SCI/D care has led to the current system that is in place, which is designed under the Hubs and Spokes model.

VHA Directive 1176 established the SCI Hubs and Spokes system. Essentially, the system is set up so that there are 25 "Hubs". The design is modeled so that care from the Hubs is from interdisciplinary teams of SCI/D experts in the SCI/D centers (hub) and the other facilities that do not have SCI centers but do have SCI/D primary care teams as spokes. As of 2025, there were 122 spokes across the United States.

The VHA directive 1176 notes that the SCI/D system of care provided by the Hubs and Spoke system provides three unique aspects;

- 1) care is comprehensive, integrated, and lifelong;
- 2) Veterans with both SCI and disorders are seen in the System of Care; and
- 3) the system is composed of Hubs with designated catchments and Spoke facilities.

Essentially, under this model, there are 25 Hubs, each Hub has a catchment area of VA medical centers (spokes) that work with and refer to the Hub. Much of an SCI/D veterans

by Zachary T. Nuetzel  
National Service Officer

care can be completed at the Spoke. However, there are some guidelines of conditions that must be treated at the Hub, unless there is a justification for it to not be transferred to the Hub and remain at the spoke. Some examples of conditions that are typically treated in the hub unless there are specific justifications for not transferring the veteran are: Amputation, long duration hospitalization, pressure injury assessments and management (stages 3 and 4), new onset SCI/D, deteriorating or worsening pressure ulcers etc.

Many of our veterans may receive a large portion of their SCI/D care at one of the spokes. For example, many may receive care at West Haven VAMC, or Providence VAMC for their typical ongoing care that is not conducted at the SCI/D hub in West Roxbury VAMC. However, they may also receive more specific care, such as treatment for worsening pressure ulcers at the SCI/D Hub. If interested in learning more on the SCI/D system of care, the VHA Directive 1176 provides a more detailed outline of the Hubs and Spoke system. Additionally, you can also contact your local PVA National Service Officer for further information.



#### REMINDER: FAA Survey for People with Disabilities About Aircraft Evacuation

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has launched a survey to gather feedback from passengers with disabilities regarding aircraft evacuations. The lack of research into the evacuation process for passengers with disabilities in air travel is a source of significant concern. Please provide FAA with your feedback by scanning the QR code.



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

...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 Policy Priorities

As we embark on the second session of the 119th Congress, PVA's priorities for 2026 are once again focused on ensuring access to the care and benefits PVA members have earned and the civil rights protections they deserve.

#### PVA priorities for 2026:

- Strengthen the Foundations of VA's Specialized Health Care Services
- Maximize VA Long-Term Services and Supports for Veterans with SCI/D
- Fortify the Financial Security of Veterans with SCI/D, their Families, and Survivors
- Increase SCI/D Veterans' Access to Health Care Services
- Ensure Equal Opportunity and Full Participation for Catastrophically Disabled Veterans

#### PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA – REGIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

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Serving New York & Western MA

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civil rights, and quality of life for veterans living with spinal cord injuries and diseases. That mission continues today through the work of chapters like the New England PVA and the leadership and involvement of members across the country.

We appreciated the opportunity to participate in this important annual gathering and look forward to continuing its work on behalf of veterans throughout the region in the months ahead.

**VA Announces New Efforts to Combat Fraud**

The VA recently announced that they are developing a new tool to scan submitted Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) for “telltale signs” of fraud. According to the VA, this new system, which is not active yet and may be rolled out sometime in 2026, will help VA field staff detect suspicious patterns that may help identify when organized fraud rings are posing as legitimate medical providers to prey on veterans. They stress that this new system is not AI but relies on manual data entry and analysis. However, this announcement was not without its controversies.

A “Stars and Stripes” article initially reported that the VA had plans to “analyze one million old disability benefits questionnaires dating back to 2010 to identify possible signs of fraud using this tool. However, after backlash from the veterans community, the VA clarified that this new system is “forward-looking only... No Veteran’s claim or benefit will be reduced or denied because of this effort.”

**President’s Report**

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everyone is training, preparing, and getting excited. All athletes and staff members will receive shirts for the Opening Ceremonies Parade of Athletes, and hopefully we’ll be bringing home plenty of medals as well. Team coaches Joanie Lynch and Maggie Budd, along with many dedicated volunteers, will once again be helping support our athletes throughout the Games.

I also want to highlight an exciting upcoming event being organized by Board Member Keelan Zenion. Keelan is helping to put together an outstanding Power Soccer Clinic that will take place on September 26th from 12:00pm-4:00pm at the Brockton VA. This clinic is open to individuals of all ages living with physical disabilities and will feature top USA instructors and athletes introducing participants to the exciting and fast-paced sport of power soccer. Keelan has worked extremely hard building relationships and organizing this event, and we are grateful for his leadership and effort. More information can be found on our website, and Keelan can be reached directly at (401) 218-3424 with any questions.

As many of you know, July 1st marks the beginning of our new fiscal year, and we have many exciting changes and initiatives ahead for the Chapter. There is still plenty of work to do, but there is also a lot to look forward to. For now, stay safe, stay active, and continue enjoying everything your Chapter has to offer.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson  
Chapter President & National Director

**Ex. Director** continued from page 3

As always, thank you for your continued support of our Chapter and the work we do together throughout the New England region. We look forward to an active and productive summer ahead and to sharing more updates with you in the months to come.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy, Executive Director

**Rise Up with Ekso Indego®**

Eligible veterans may receive an Ekso Indego Personal exoskeleton at NO COST!

- Enjoy eye-level conversations
- Community walking speeds
- Lightest weight exoskeleton
- Modular design for easy transport

**Ekso Indego Gets You Walking Again**



Ekso Indego® enables individuals paralyzed from spinal cord injuries (level T3-L5)\* to stand and walk, offering a new level of independence.

An evaluation by your providers at an SCI/D center is required to determine eligibility for use of the Ekso Indego device.

Contact us for more information  
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## House Vote on Key Benefits Bill Expected Soon

Severely disabled veterans and their survivors depend on federal benefits that recognize both the economic and non-economic consequences of service-connected disabilities. Yet these benefits, particularly Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), have not kept pace with the realities faced by those who rely on them the most.

SMC is one of the most important ancillary benefits provided to veterans with profound service-connected disabilities. Unlike other forms of compensation, SMC acknowledges non-economic factors, such as personal hardship, profound functional loss, and lifelong social inadaptability. While no benefit can fully compensate for these life-altering disabilities, SMC is essential to offsetting some portion of the daily challenges these veterans endure.

Meanwhile, DIC serves as a safeguard for survivors, helping ensure that the death of a service-disabled veteran does not lead to financial devastation. Currently, the base rate for DIC is just \$1,699.36 per month, with modest adjustments for dependents. Since 1993, DIC has seen only minimal increases, leaving many surviving spouses struggling to maintain economic stability after their loved one passes.

During the week of May 18, the House is expected to vote on the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act (H.R. 6047), which would increase SMC rates for categories R1, R2, and T, as well as the monthly rate of DIC. These changes would represent the most significant improvements to survivor benefits and high-level SMC rates in decades.

Considerable opposition to the bill still exists, so it is extremely important that your representative hears from you. Send them a written message by clicking [here](#).



**Scan the QR code to go to PVA Action Force to send your representative a message.**

## SVAC Considers Wide-Range of Veterans-Related Bills

On April 29, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a hearing to examine 25 pieces of legislation that covered a wide array of veterans' issues, including health care delivery, appointment scheduling, and apprenticeships through the GI Bill. Most importantly, the committee considered three bills addressing some of PVA's top legislative priorities. These bills included S. 749, the Justice for ALS Veterans Act, which would allow the surviving spouse of a veteran who dies from ALS to be eligible for additional Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) known as the "DIC Kicker." Currently, a veteran must be rated totally disabled for a continuous period of at least eight years to be eligible for the kicker. Unfortunately, many ALS veterans do not live the full eight years needed to receive the additional amount. This legislation would ensure their surviving spouses are eligible for it.

The committee also considered S. 3988, the Veterans Spinal Trauma Access to New Devices (STAND) Act, which would require the VA to offer annual preventative health evaluations for veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D). It would also ensure veterans are evaluated for advanced assistive technologies and require the VA to report to Congress on the utilization and outcomes of their use. Lastly, it directs the VA to consult with specialists, clinicians, medical device manufacturers and veteran organizations, like PVA, to ensure the department's policies reflect advancements in SCI/D care.

Finally, the committee considered S. 3647, the Disabled Veterans Dignity Act. This legislation would codify VA's Bowel and Bladder program; modernize its processes, training, and procedures; and clarify participation criteria, reimbursement rates, and frequency. It also provides a pathway for reconsideration in the event a veteran's request for participation in the program is denied. Timely reimbursement and the tax treatment of payments are the chief complaints of PVA members who must rely on bowel and bladder care to meet their needs. We believe the bill will help improve the timeliness of payments, but it does not address the taxation issue. In a statement for the record, we urged the committee to work with the House to address it.

You can watch a recording of the hearing and read PVA's statement for the record once the official summary of the hearing is published.

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