PVA Paralyzed Veterans of America
New England Chapter

CORD WORD

November 2026

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

The Second War: What We Owe Our Veterans After the Fighting Ends

By Mark Murphy, Executive Director NEPVA

Every November 11, Americans pause to honor the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform. We gather at memorials, attend ceremonies, raise flags, and express our gratitude. These traditions matter. They remind us of the extraordinary sacrifices made by those who served and preserve a national memory that must never be taken for granted. But this Veterans Day, I would like to invite us to consider a question that receives far less attention: What happens after the war ends?

Honoring military service means supporting lifelong health care, defending accessibility, strengthening the systems veterans depend upon, and listening to veterans themselves.

For veterans living with spinal cord injuries, diseases, or other catastrophic disabilities, the end of military service can mark the beginning of another struggle - one that unfolds not on a battlefield, but in hospitals, homes, workplaces, and the institutions responsible for honoring our nation's commitments. There are no victory parades to mark its conclusion, no armistice to announce that the fighting is over. It is what I have come to think of as the second war.

In my work with the New England PVA, I have had the privilege of knowing veterans whose lives challenge our assumptions about sacrifice, independence, and resilience. These are individuals who survived devastating injuries, only to discover that survival was the beginning of a much longer journey. Veterans who worked to reclaim their independence, only to confront barriers that had little to do with their physical limitations. Veterans who wanted nothing more extraordinary than to work, travel, participate in their communities, and enjoy the freedoms most of us take for granted.

Consider something as ordinary as boarding an airplane. For someone who relies on a wheelchair, flying can require an entirely different calculation. Will the chair arrive undamaged? How will the passenger transfer into an aircraft seat? What happens when the restroom is inaccessible? Some wheelchair users deliberately limit what they drink before a flight because using an aircraft restroom may be impossible. Or consider a veteran who wants to return to work but must weigh employment against complicated questions involving health care, benefits, personal assistance, and the financial support that makes independent living possible. These challenges reveal an important truth: Independence

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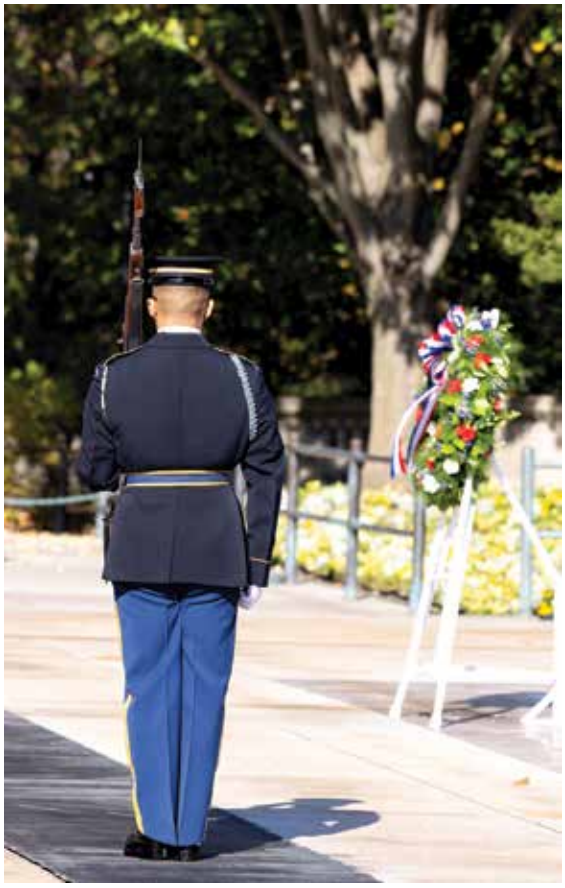

The New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America (New England PVA) is a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1947 that has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members – veterans of the armed forces who have experienced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

I am pleased to share several exciting updates from the New England PVA. The past few months have been filled with meaningful gatherings, important milestones, and new opportunities to strengthen our mission of serving veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases throughout New England.

One of our most significant developments has been the relocation of our Chapter headquarters to Sudbury, Massachusetts. After many years in West Roxbury, we officially made the move in July. Our new office represents an exciting new chapter for us, providing a permanent home - one that we are proud to own outright - from which we can continue supporting our members, coordinating programs, and strengthening relationships with community partners. This important milestone was made possible through the generosity of our donors and a sustained commitment to strong fundraising and responsible financial stewardship over the past several years. We look forward to welcoming members and visitors as we continue settling into our new space.



In August, we held our Annual Golf Tournament at South Shore Country Club in Hingham, Massachusetts. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring together friends, supporters, and members of our community for a day of golf, fellowship, and support for our mission. Events like this remind us how fortunate we are to have individuals and organizations who believe in the work we do. My sincere thanks go to everyone who participated, sponsored, volunteered, or otherwise helped make the tournament possible.

September brought another highlight of our year: our Annual Chapter Membership Gathering and Clambake. Despite the rainy weather, the event was a tremendous success. It was especially gratifying to see so many members, families, and friends come together to reconnect, share stories, and enjoy one another's company. During the gathering, we also had the privilege of recognizing our most recent Pierik Award recipients, whose contributions to our Chapter deserve special acknowledgment. You can read more about these deserving honorees elsewhere in this edition.

I am also delighted to announce that we were recently awarded a $10,000 grant from the Essex County Community Foundation through its Essex County Veterans Fund. This generous investment will support our Essex County Veterans Disability & Wellness Initiative, helping us expand our efforts to improve the well-being and quality of life of veterans living with disabilities in Essex County. We are deeply grateful to the Foundation for recognizing the importance of this work and for its commitment to those who have served our nation.



This month, Chapter President and National Director Brad Carlson, his wife Kathy, a dedicated Chapter volunteer, and I had planned to travel to Orlando, Florida, for PVA's Fall Board of Directors meeting. Unfortunately, an FAA ground stop on Friday evening disrupted our travel plans and prevented us from attending in person. Nevertheless, we participated virtually, remaining engaged in the important discussions and organizational business taking place at the national level. These meetings provide valuable opportunities to collaborate with fellow Chapter leaders, discuss organizational priorities, and ensure that the voices and needs of our New England members remain part of the national conversation.

I also want to share an important update regarding the distribution of CordWord, our quarterly Chapter newsletter. In the coming weeks, I

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is not simply the ability to do everything without help. It is the freedom to make meaningful choices about one's own life. That freedom depends, in part, on the systems and communities we build.

The founders of Paralyzed Veterans of America understood this eighty years ago. In 1946, veterans who had survived spinal cord injuries during World War II recognized that the country welcoming them home was not yet prepared for the lives they hoped to lead. Medical advances had made survival possible, but survival alone could not guarantee accessible housing, employment, health care, or full participation in American life. They organized and advocated for change, establishing a mission that continues today. We have made extraordinary progress in medicine, rehabilitation, accessibility, and disability rights. But progress is not the same as completion.

The true measure of how we honor our veterans is not found only in what we say about their service. It is found in the lives we help make possible afterward.

A wheelchair that cannot be repaired promptly can mean lost independence. Delays in necessary care can place enormous pressure on families. Inaccessible buildings can turn routine outings into obstacles. And as veterans age, their needs evolve, as do those of the spouses and caregivers who have stood beside them for decades. Our nation's obligations must endure just as long.

We must also resist the temptation to view veterans with disabilities only through the familiar lenses of heroism or tragedy. Not every wheelchair user wants to be an inspiration. Not every veteran wants to become an advocate. Sometimes a veteran simply wants to play golf, enjoy dinner with friends, go to work, or spend an uneventful afternoon with family. I have come to believe that one of the greatest things we owe our veterans is the right to be ordinary - to pursue their own ambitions, make their own choices, and be known for who they are rather than what they have endured.



As I have reflected on these questions while writing a book about the lives of paralyzed veterans, I have become increasingly convinced that Veterans Day should be understood not only as a commemoration, but as a renewal of our national responsibility. Honoring military service means supporting lifelong health care, defending accessibility, strengthening the systems veterans depend upon, and listening to veterans themselves. Organizations like Paralyzed Veterans of America exist because gratitude, however sincere, has never been enough. A heartfelt thank-you matters, but meaningful access, competent care, and accountability give that gratitude substance.

This Veterans Day, I hope we continue to attend ceremonies, fly our flags, and thank those who have served. But I also hope we remember the veteran who wakes up tomorrow morning, long after the ceremonies have ended. The veteran preparing for another medical appointment, navigating a benefits decision, waiting for a wheelchair repair, or simply hoping to get on with living.

The true measure of how we honor our veterans is not found only in what we say about their service. It is found in the lives we help make possible afterward. The first war asked something of them. The second asks something of us. And on this Veterans Day, that responsibility belongs to all of us.

From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President

Dear Friends,

As another summer came to a close and the holiday season approaches, there's plenty of exciting news to share from New England PVA!

Following our Annual Golf Tournament, we weren't quite finished with our summer activities. Next up was our Annual Chapter Clambake! Once again, the Italian American War Veterans Club graciously provided its pavilion for this wonderful gathering, and we couldn't be more appreciative. Of course, Mother Nature had other plans for the weather. We expected a little rain, but we certainly got a lot more than that! Fortunately, everyone stayed dry under the pavilion, and the weather did nothing to dampen the spirit of the occasion. It was wonderful to welcome so many familiar faces, including doctors, nurses, and staff from Building 8 at the Brockton VA, along with our members, families, and friends from throughout the PVA community. This annual event is an opportunity for everyone to come together, reconnect, and simply enjoy one another's company. And, as always, there was plenty of food! The menu featured lobsters, steamers, chicken, steaks, and all the fixings. Nobody went home hungry, and we were happy to send the leftovers back to Brockton. We were also fortunate to welcome Joe Badzmierowski, Director of Field Services for PVA's Veterans Benefits Department, as our guest speaker. Joe delivered an excellent and informative presentation about PVA, its work, and where the organization stands today. A huge thank-you to Joe for joining us despite the lousy weather and, more importantly, for his continued dedication to our veterans!



Our Chapter continues to grow and strengthen because of the dedication of our members, volunteers, staff, and supporters.





Following the Clambake, it was time to get down to some serious business: moving our Chapter headquarters! With our West Roxbury lease coming to an end in September, NEPVA made the exciting decision to purchase our own office condominium in Sudbury, Massachusetts. For those who haven't heard the news, this is a major milestone for our Chapter. The new location is more centrally situated for our organization, eliminates the uncertainty of a long-term lease, and means we no longer have to worry about an elevator that only seemed to work half the time! The new office is an excellent fit for our needs, providing a comfortable and functional space from which to serve our members. The move itself took about a week and required plenty of hard work and manpower. We were also grateful to the moving company for helping us arrange donations of furniture to other nonprofit organizations, allowing those items to benefit others in our community.

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Congratulations to Our 2026 Pierik Award Recipients!

At our Annual Chapter Membership Gathering and Clambake in September, the New England PVA proudly recognized the recipients of our 2026 Pierik Awards. These awards honor outstanding healthcare professionals whose compassion, dedication, and commitment to excellence make a meaningful difference in the lives of veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases. We are pleased to recognize this year's 4 deserving honorees.

Please join us to congratulate all 4 recipients! We are deeply grateful for their outstanding service and their continued commitment to improving the lives of our nation's veterans.



Graciete "Grace" Tavares
West Roxbury VA Medical Center
(Nursing Assistant)
Grace is celebrated for her compassion, reliability, and exceptional patient-centered care. Since joining Unit A2 in 2025, she has earned widespread appreciation from veterans, families, and colleagues for her kindness, professionalism, and willingness to help others.



Deina Goncalves, NA
Brockton VA Medical Center
(Nursing Assistant)
Deina consistently goes above and beyond to provide personalized, dignified care to veterans on Unit 81B. Her kindness, patience, and ability to build trusting relationships have earned her the admiration of veterans and colleagues alike.



Nurse managers Julie Veilleux and Cassandra Sandoval accepting awards for Bibiana Obi and Melissa Depina who were unable to attend.

Melissa Depina, LPN
Brockton VA Medical Center
(Licensed Nursing)
Melissa is recognized for her exceptional clinical expertise, leadership, and unwavering advocacy for veterans on Unit 81B. Her dedication to patient safety, teamwork, and compassionate care has made her a trusted colleague and an invaluable advocate for the veterans she serves.

Bibiana Obi, RN
West Roxbury VA Medical Center
(Licensed Nursing)
Bibiana exemplifies professionalism, compassion, and selfless service. Her willingness to volunteer for a temporary assignment at the Brockton VA to support fellow healthcare professionals and veterans demonstrates her extraordinary dedication and commitment to teamwork.











National Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) Conference

Congratulations to Jennifer Leonard, RN, SCI Wound Specialist RN at the Brockton Campus, and Holly Warshaw, SCI Volunteer! At the National Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) Conference in Providence, RI, on October 23, 2026, Jennifer received the 2026 NOVA RN Clinical Excellence Award, and Holly received the 2026 NOVA Veterans Service Award.



Congratulations to Thomas Cunningham, SCI PA at the Brockton Campus, who was named Physician Associate of the Year during an award presentation Oct. 9, 2026, at VA Boston's West Roxbury campus.



Left to Right: Jennifer Leonard and Holly Warshaw

Left, Middle: Thomas Cunningham, PA, and Michael Charness, MD, Chief of Staff, at VA Boston Healthcare System.

Exec. Director

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will be sending a separate communication to members explaining how to continue receiving a physical copy of CordWord by mail. Members who wish to receive printed editions will be asked to complete a brief online form confirming their current mailing address. This process will help us maintain accurate mailing records and ensure that printed newsletters reach those who wish to receive them. Please watch for this communication and follow the instructions provided if you would like to continue receiving CordWord through the mail.

As we observed Veterans Day on November 11, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have worn our nation's uniform. Veterans Day is an important reminder that the service and sacrifices of our veterans deserve recognition not just on one day, but throughout the entire year. We are privileged to honor that service through our daily commitment to advocacy, independence, opportunity, and community.

To our members, Board of Directors, volunteers, donors, and community partners, thank you for your continued dedication and support. Everything we accomplish is made possible through the strength of this community, and I look forward to all that we will achieve together in the months ahead. We hope you and your families had a meaningful Veterans Day and wish you a wonderful holiday season.

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

VA Launches Pilot Program to Speed Veterans' Access to Services, Care, and Benefits

On October 7, VA launched a new pilot program at six VA facilities to help veterans establish VA.gov accounts faster than ever before, which means speedier access to VA services, care, and benefits.

VA has worked with technology and security company CLEAR to deploy CLEAR pods at six VA hospitals across the country. Veterans who want to create a new account on VA.gov can use these pods to sign up in a matter of minutes with the assistance of VA staff.

This option for setting up a VA.gov account is available at VA medical centers in Atlanta, GA; Brooklyn, NY; Orlando, FL; Palo Alto, CA; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Washington, D.C. VA will consider expanding this system to other facilities pending the results of this pilot program.

CLEAR uses the same scanning technology deployed at airports and other secure locations to create an easier way to establish a VA.gov account for veterans who may have mobility, connectivity, or other challenges when they try to sign up at home.

Here's how it works:

- **Veterans can visit any participating medical center with a valid, non-expired government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, state ID, or passport, along with a phone number and personal email address.**
- **VA staff will help veterans quickly enter their information and have veterans take a photo at the CLEAR pod, which sets up the account in a matter of minutes.**
- **Veterans can set up face ID or other recognition tools so they can use CLEAR to access their VA accounts at home in a matter of seconds.**

Using CLEAR to gain secure access to VA.gov is free and optional. Veterans can continue using existing options if they prefer. Choosing not to log in to VA.gov with CLEAR will not affect veterans' ability to access VA benefits or services. Veterans' personal health information stays with the VA. CLEAR does not receive or access it and will not sell biometric or sensitive personal data.

Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat: Connection, Companionship, 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.

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

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photos: Cindy Kane

Service Officers Report

Overview of VA Dental Benefits

by Zachary T. Nuetzel
National Service Officer

Hello NEPVA. I hope everyone is enjoying this change to cold weather as the holidays approach. Many veterans often seek information regarding what dental benefits are available to them through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). A common question that veterans ask is "Am I eligible for VA dental care. The answer is, "it depends". My aim for this article is to provide an overview of the eligibility criteria, and how much dental care you may be eligible for.

VA dental care eligibility depends on a multitude of factors including the veterans service connections, military history, health needs, and living situations. In this article I will break down the eligibility criteria based on these circumstances of eligibility. The amount of VA dental care that a veteran is eligible to receive depends on which of the 10 dental benefit classes they are assigned. Dental eligible veterans will be assigned to one of nine classes bases on the above factors with an additional tenth class assigned for veterans receiving inpatient care.

One of the eligibility requirements for dental care is based on the veteran's service connection status. Veterans who have a service connected dental disability, and receive compensation for that dental disability (rated 10% or greater for the dental disability), are eligible to receive any needed dental care. These veterans are assigned to Class I. If you have a service connected dental disability rated at 0% or rated for treatment purposes only, you are only able to receive treatment that is necessary for the correction of that dental condition/ and to ensure you have a working set of teeth. These veterans are assigned dental class II(a). Another group of veterans who are eligible to receive any needed dental care, are veterans rated 100% or veterans entitled to receive pay at the 100% rate due to individual unemployability. These veterans are assigned to Class IV. An important caveat to the 100% rating criteria is that this is reserved for veterans rated at a schedular 100%. This means that you receiving a temporary 100% for hospitalization or rehabilitation you do not qualify. The final class based on service connection, is assigned to veterans who are not service connected for a dental condition, but they have a dental condition that is making a service connected condition worse. These veterans can receive care in order to treat the dental condition that is making their service connected condition worse. These veterans are assigned to class III.



Although some veterans may be eligible for dental care through service connection, others may be eligible through their military service history. One group of veterans eligible through military service history are veterans who served active duty for 90 days or more after August 2, 1990 (Persian Gulf War period). Veterans who meet that criteria, must also have received a discharge other than dishonorable, and their DD-214 shows that they did not receive a dental exam prior to discharge. With those criteria met, they must also meet the final criterion of applying within 180 days of discharge or release from active service on order to receive a one-time dental care. These veterans are assigned to class II. The other class assigned based on military history is assigned to former Prisoners of War. If you are a former prisoner of war, you can receive any needed dental work and you will be assigned to class II(c).

Veterans not eligible for dental care through service connection, nor military service, may be eligible for care through class IV or inpatient status based on health situations. Somewhat similar to class III which was discussed under eligibility based on service connection, some veterans will be eligible for dental care based on a dental condition making a health condition worse. However, unlike class III which is a dental condition making a service connected condition worse, veterans can receive dental care for a dental condition that the dental provider concludes

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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.

is making a health condition more difficult to treat, and they are receiving VA care or scheduled to receive VA inpatient care. These veterans are assigned to Class VI. Other than veterans assigned to class IV, veterans who receive inpatient care in a VA hospital, domiciliary care, VA long term care, or nursing home are eligible for dental care that their primary care provider and a VA dental care provider conclude is needed to manage a health condition.

Veterans who do not meet eligibility through service connection, military history, or healthcare needs may meet eligibility based on outside circumstances such as homelessness or enrolled in VR&E. Veterans who are homeless, can receive dental care through the Homeless Veterans Dental Program and receive one-time dental care in order to relieve pain, aid in obtaining occupation, or to treat gum infections that can lead to pain, swelling, or tooth loss. Veterans in this program are assigned to Class II(b). Lastly, veterans that are active in the Chapter 31 VR&E program are eligible to receive dental care as long as it is needed to be enrolled in the program, reach a goal, prevent having to leave VR&E, adjust to a job, or allow independence with daily living. Veterans receiving dental care through VR&E are assigned to class V.

In conclusion, there are numerous dental classes you may be assigned to for VA Dental. Although some dental classes can receive any needed dental care, if you meet any of the above criteria, there is some dental care you are eligible for. If you do not meet the criteria for any of the above classes, you still may be eligible for a more affordable dental insurance through the VA dental insurance plan (VADIP). If you are unsure if you are eligible for dental benefits, please reach out to your local PVA representative for assistance.

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retreat

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and makeup sessions for attendees - a truly special treat!



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.

President's Report

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Once renovations are complete, our new headquarters will feature a fully accessible, unisex bathroom, a conference room, and three offices. We're looking forward to getting everything settled and welcoming members to our new home. We'll continue sharing updates as the renovations progress and announce an official opening date when everything is ready.

Turning to adaptive sports, we're excited about our first National Power Soccer Clinic, scheduled for November 20 at the Brockton VA gym. This exciting initiative was the idea of Assistant Sports Director Keelan Zenion, who worked alongside Sports Director Mike Moran to organize the event. We're grateful for their efforts to bring new opportunities to our athletes, and we'll have more to share about the clinic in our next newsletter edition.

I'm also excited to announce that NEPVA will be hosting a major National Boccia Tournament on December 5 and 6 at the Brockton VA gym! This isn't our usual in-house boccia competition. It's a national event that will bring athletes from across the country together for an exciting weekend of competition and camaraderie. If you enjoy boccia, whether as a participant or spectator, this is an event you won't want to miss! Additional details are available on our Chapter website, and registration information can be found through PVA.

As we close out another busy and productive season, I want to thank everyone who continues to support the New England PVA. Our Chapter continues to grow and strengthen because of the dedication of our members, volunteers, staff, and supporters. Please continue to get involved, attend our events, and enjoy everything your Chapter has to offer. After all, this organization belongs to you, and your participation is what makes it special. Wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season, and I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

Brad Carlson
Chapter President & National Director



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2026 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report Released

VA has released the 2026 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. The report is based on national death data that is available through 2024. In 2024, there were 6,488 veteran suicides that kept the daily average at 17.7 veterans per day.

Within the report, VA states that the key findings are that they have expanded access to better reach veterans in need and that from 2001 to 2024, the percentage of veterans enrolled with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) rose from 19.5 percent to 50 percent. In 2024, the year covered within the report, 62 percent of veterans who died by suicide were not receiving VA health care in the year they died or the year prior. This is critical data since veteran suicide is much higher for veterans who do not engage with VA health care.

While suicide rates for veterans enrolled in VHA fell 2.2 percent from 2001 to 2024, rates for unenrolled veterans increased by almost 71 percent during that time. Between 2023 and 2024, veteran suicide rates fell 4.8 percent for enrolled veterans and rose 3.7 percent for unenrolled veterans.

In 2024, suicide was the eleventh-leading cause of death among veterans and the fourth-leading cause of premature mortality. Firearms continue to be heavily involved in the veteran suicide epidemic at greater numbers than their civilian counterparts. Additionally, veterans continue to die by suicide at higher rates than their civilian counterparts as well. Male veteran suicide is 56.5 percent higher than non-veteran adults and women veteran suicide rates are 99.9. percent higher than female non-veteran adults in the US.

There are many resources at your local VA if you or someone you know is struggling with mental health or suicidal ideation. Please reach out to your VA provider or call the 988 line if you are struggling.

VA Expands Emergency Community Care Notification Options

Beginning August 10, veterans will have an additional option for alerting VA that they've received emergency care at a non-VA hospital. Under current law, veterans or providers must notify VA within 72 hours of emergency treatment for the care to be considered for authorization under the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP). Previously, this notification was required to be made to the appropriate official at the nearest VA medical facility, often via telephone. The new rule allows for notification through VA's centralized Emergency Care Reporting process, providing a single, nationwide system for reporting emergency care.

Veterans and providers may still notify the nearest VA medical facility, if they choose. This rule does not change veterans' eligibility for emergency care, the requirement to notify VA within 72 hours, or the standards VA uses to determine whether emergency treatment qualifies for payment. Instead, it modernizes the notification process by reducing confusion about where notifications should be sent. The link for the new system will appear here on August 10.

Beginning August 10th you can view the new online system by scanning the QR code.

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

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Paralyzed Veterans of America

New England Chapter

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.

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