

Buckeye Banner

JUNE 2024



Paralyzed Veterans of America

Buckeye Chapter



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OUR MISSION

The Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter strives to improve the quality of life of honorably discharged Veterans who have spinal cord injury, dysfunction or illness including but not limited to multiple sclerosis and ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) through advocacy, medical research, sports and recreation, education and communication.

UPCOMING DATES

June 21-22nd: Billiards Tournament

July 4th: Independence Day

July 25-30th: National Veterans Wheelchair Games

CHAIN OF COMMAND

BPVA Officers

Carl Harris, President	carlh@buckeyepva.org
Milton Young, Vice President	miltony@buckeyepva.org
Holly Koester, Secretary	hollyk@buckeyepva.org
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Paul Mann, Board Member	paulm@buckeyepva.org
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DISCLAMIER

The Buckeye Banner is a publication of the Buckeye Chapter, PVA, and is not meant to inform its readers of Chapter activities, legislation, and other matters of concern to veterans and/or members of the disability community. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the BPVA, its Officers, Board Members, the Editor, or production staff.

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA BUCKEYE CHAPTER

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Paralyzed Veterans of
America, Buckeye Chapter



Paralyzed Veterans of
America -- Buckeye Chapter



@PVABuckeye

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Warm weather is finally here. It sure took its time getting here, but now we can enjoy nice warm sunny weather that I like. Hope all of you get a chance to soak up some vitamin D from the sun.



Remember, this is an election year in the chapter. Please consider running for one of the nine board positions. I think you will find it rewarding to help the chapter and its members during the two-year term. You can find all the information concerning the election in an article in this newsletter. Also, you should have received a letter telling you that nominations are open, and you can nominate yourself and do a 300 word bio to help other members know who you are. You must be a certified member of PVA, which is an easy part to accomplish. Contact the office if you have any questions and we will help you through the certification.

There are other events going on this summer, the first is our Annual Buckeye Billiards tournament. It takes place on June 21st and 22nd at Wickliffe Lanes. It is open to all members whether play or not, to have a good time and harass fellow members as they try to sink those balls in the corner and side pockets. So come on out and have some fun with our fellow members and guests.

Then on September 9 will be our annual golf outing fundraiser and this year will take place at Bunker Hill golf course. This is always a fun event where you get to talk to the golfers as they lose their golf balls, but still wish them luck. We can always use volunteers to sit by the tees and talk to the golfers as they come up to tee off. We finish off the event with a pretty good meal and sell raffle and 50/50 tickets. It's a good way to get out and enjoy the sun and the clean clean air. Think about volunteering this year.

As always, your concerns, issues, or ideas that can help you or make our chapter better are always welcome. Please either contact me at the chapter office or email me at carlh@buckeyepva.org

Sincerely,

Carl Harris

Carl Harris, President

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hello everyone it's spring time when everyone is planting their flowers and preparing their gardens. Spring is also the time when we observe Memorial Day it's the last Monday in May; it honors men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. It originally was called Decoration Day, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday through an act of Congress in 1971 and its roots date back to the civil war era, according to the US Department of Veterans Affairs . Unlike Veterans Day, Memorial Day honors all military members who have died, while serving in the US forces. This years, Memorial Day will be celebrated May 27th. So go find a Memorial Day event to go to and pay tribute to those service men and women that paid the ultimate price for our freedoms. Have a great spring and summer and be safe.

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Milton Young".

Milton Young Government Relations Director





Paralyzed Veterans of America 78th National Convention Resolution Status

24-M-1 Adding Space Force to PVA Membership	Withdrawn
24-M-2 Changes to PVA’s Acknowledgement of Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct Form	Passed Consent Agenda
24-M-3 Changes to Submitting Bob Webb Excellence in Newsletter Award Nominations	Passed as Amended
24-M-4 Whistleblower Policy Revisions	Passed as Amended
24-M-5 Eliminate a Requirement within Chapter Grant Criteria	Passed Consent Agenda
24-M-6 Membership/Transfer of Members Applications Changes	Passed Consent Agenda
24-M-7 Changes to PVA Program Policy Manual	Passed
24-M-8 Auto Grant Benefit	Withdrawn
24-M-0-1 Patient Bill of Rights	Passed

Paralyzed Veterans of America 78th National Convention

Election Results for the Executive Committee

National President	Robert Thomas	Buckeye Chapter
Senior Vice President	Tammy Jones	Texas Chapter
Vice President	Josue Cordova	Vaughn Chapter
Vice President	Ken Ness	Wisconsin Chapter
Vice President	Lawrence Mullins	West Virginia Chapter
Vice President	Anne Robinson	Texas Chapter
Treasurer	Tom Wheaton	Mountain States Chapter
Secretary	Marcus Murray	Colonial Chapter



BENEFITS UPDATE

By: AARON STEVENS



Changes to VA Health Care Eligibility

On March 5, 2024, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expanded VA health care to millions more Veterans, years earlier than called for by the PACT Act. Eligibility will apply to veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after 9/11, as well as veterans who never deployed but were also exposed to toxins or hazards during service. Veterans will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits.

You may apply for VA health care if any of these descriptions are true for you:

- You served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after 9/11, or
- You deployed in support of the Global War on Terror, or
- You were exposed to toxins or other hazards during military service

“Veterans can qualify to enroll directly in VA care based on where they served, what activities they participated in here at home, income requirements or more. While this expansion of care does not expand access to all veterans, it is a massive expansion of VA care,” said VA Press Secretary Terrence Hayes.

The expansion means that certain individuals will qualify for VA health care up to 8 years earlier than called for by the PACT Act, Hayes said.

The VA has long forced vets to prove that a later-in-life illness was due to a specific toxic exposure they suffered while deployed, requiring vets to submit medical exams, tests, and expert opinions. Under the law, the VA now assumes that a vet’s claim for benefits is valid if they were present in a war zone where toxic chemicals were likely present – a reality of most U.S. bases during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

The expansion now includes veterans with active service assigned to a duty station in and the airspace above:

- On or after August 2, 1990, in Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, or the United Arab Emirates.



BENEFITS UPDATE CONT.

-On or after September 11, 2001, in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan.

Eligible veterans also include those who deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, or Resolute Support Mission.

The expansion also applies to veterans who never deployed as part of a conflict but participated in a toxic exposure risk activity while serving or training on active duty, or inactive duty training. The toxic exposures include:

- air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires)
- chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water)
- occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams)
- radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure)
- warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons)

The VA will use service records and all available information to determine if former troops participated in toxic exposure risk activities as part of its nationwide campaign to enroll as many veterans as possible. Since the PACT Act became law, more than half a million veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

All eligible Veterans can visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more and apply for VA health care beginning March 5. You can also contact your local PVA National Service Office at info@buckeyepva.org with any questions on VA Health Care eligibility.

BEREA EAGLES # 2282

The Fraternal Order of Eagles is an international non-profit organization uniting fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice, and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills and promoting peace, prosperity, gladness and hope.



The F.O.E. donates more than \$10 million a year to local communities, fundraisers, charities and more. As part of its philosophy, the F.O.E. gives back 100 percent of monies raised in the form of grants. Fundraisers are conducted for eight major charities, including kidney, heart, diabetes, cancer and spinal cord injury funds, a children's fund, memorial foundation and the Golden Eagle Fund.

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About George Music Company

Welcome to Akron's finest entertainment company. We are a locally owned family operated company serving the Northeast Ohio area since 1933. We offer the absolute finest, most up-to-date equipment available along with providing a strong dedication to the success of our customers. Our State of the art entertainment solutions are specifically tailored to meet our customers' individual needs.



George Music Company provides the latest in digital internet jukeboxes, NGX Jukeboxes, Touch Tunes Jukeboxes, skill games and amusement machines to bars, taverns, pubs, restaurants, bowling alleys, universities, and social clubs. We install and service Internet Jukeboxes in Bars, Taverns, Fraternal Organizations, anywhere. Delivery and setup is also available (call for details). George Music Company only provides service on what we sell. We also sell used coin-operated machines for the home.

As you can see, we are the premier amusement supplier in the Akron and surrounding area. To increase revenue and keep your customers entertained and satisfied, call George Music Company and find out how you can add excellent entertainment equipment to your establishment.

**Call (330) 923-9868 or
toll free at 1-800-492-9507**

Getting Veterans with SCI Back on Their Feet

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

What is Ekso Indego?

A powered exoskeleton that enables individuals with spinal cord injuries (T3-L5)* to stand and walk, offering a new level of independence.

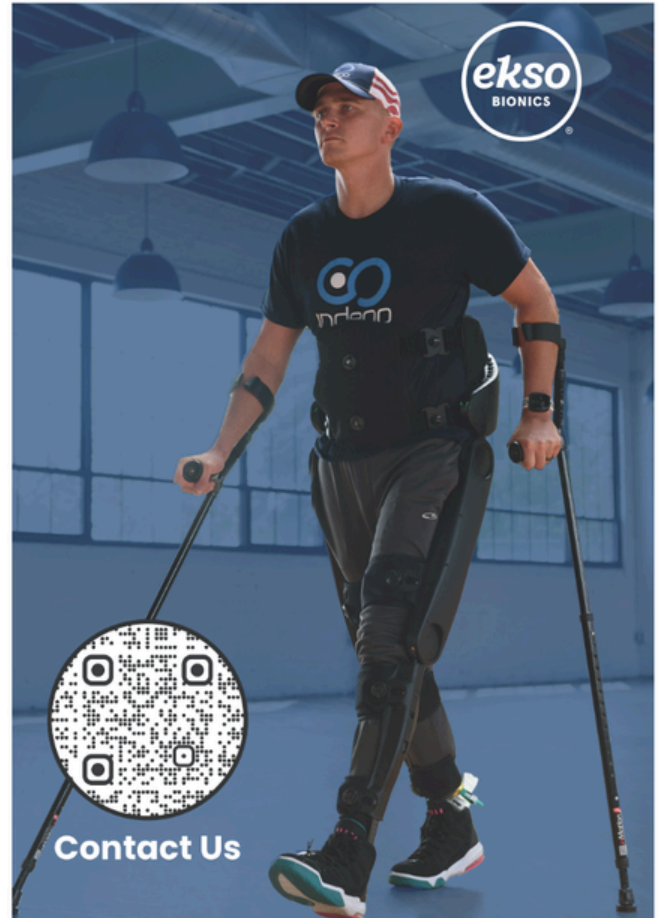
- Walk at home and in your community
- Improve your cardio and bone density
- Enjoy eye-level conversations again

VA policy allows Ekso Indego to be issued at no cost for those who qualify.

How to Get Qualified

Contact us to find out if you may be eligible. An evaluation by your provider at a SCI/D center is required to determine eligibility for use of an Ekso Indego Personal Device.

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



PVA SPORTS AND RECREATION AWARD

The Paralyzed Veterans of America Chapter Sports and Recreation Award was awarded to the Buckeye Chapter at the 78th National Convention in Minneapolis, MN. This is the 3rd (third) consecutive year that the Buckeye Chapter has won the award and the 15th (fifteenth) time since 1981 when the Award began to be awarded.



Shown in the Picture are (L) Doug Beckley, Buckeye Chapter National Director and (R) Robert Thomas PVA National President and Buckeye PVA Member.



2024 BUCKEYE PVA CHAPTER ELECTIONS

CHAPTER ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP!

Elections for the Board of Directors (BOD) of Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter (Buckeye PVA) will be held this year. All nine positions are open for election.

Any member in good standing may run for office, but you must be certified before appearing on the ballot. Certification is simple and mainly requires submitting your DD 214, an application for certification and a physician's statement to National PVA. Contact Carl Harris (carlh@buckeyepva.org) for assistance.

Nominations are being accepted by mail or email this year. If you are interested in helping the Chapter continue to improve our services to SCI/SCD veterans, please consider entering your name into the nomination by notifying the office and submitting a brief biography (300 words or less). We have members all over Ohio, and your bio will help them learn something about you before voting. Bios can be submitted to the Chapter Office at 2775 Bishop Road, Suite B, Willoughby Hills, OH 44092, or to Sarah Hoffman at sarahh@buckeyepva.org.

Being on the BOD at Buckeye PVA is a volunteer position. A board member may be reimbursed for adequately approved travel and expenses. There are generally 12 meetings per year, and all members are expected to attend each meeting. Some of these meetings may be attended by video or teleconference if you live outside the Cleveland area. As needs arise, you will also be asked to work on various committees and chapter functions. Access to an internet-enabled computer is required in that the board does much of its communication by email. A buckeyepva.org email account will be provided to each board member. Contact any current officer or member of the board if you have questions concerning board responsibilities.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- June 3, 2024 – Nominations Open to Membership.
- July 5, 2024 – Deadline for submitting nominations & biographies.
 - July 12, 2024 – Ballots will be sent out.
 - August 16, 2024 – Ballot return deadline.
- August 29, 2024 – Special General Membership Meeting to announce results.
 - September 19, 2024 – BOD Meeting with old and new BOD members.
 - October 1, 2024 — New Board takes over.

If you have any questions, please contact the Chapter office at 216-731-1017.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS REPORT



At the end of May, Nashville hosted the annual meeting for the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) at the Music City Center. CMSC is an annual gathering of MS professionals and providers from across the world. PVA, as the largest VSO dealing specifically with MS diagnosed Veterans, had a table set up to educate and advocate. There were also many classes and lectures covering a range of MS related subjects from nutrition and its effectiveness on long term prognosis, to new Disease Modifying Therapies (DMTs) that are showing promise.

At the chapter, we are hoping to start an MS Support group and find ways to reach out to our MS members more regularly. We have MS symptom cards to show people when having a bad symptom day or an exacerbation. Also, we are looking to help Support our MS members in the best ways possible. If you have any ideas of how we can better serve our MS community, please reach out to myself at joshuam@buckeyepva.org or the office.

Regards,

Josh Maley

Josh Maley MS P.O.C. Buckeye Chapter

HOMES FOR VETERANS

BY: PAUL MANN

Hello Buckeye PVA members, I wanted to inform you about an organization I found recently. I'm always looking to improve my home, to make it more accessible for myself. I am not service connected with my injury, so grants are limited. I recently found a organization online named Homes For Veterans. I told him that I don't have access to the back side of my home, which left me with only



one exit in case of emergency. They contacted me; they had me get three quotes. Within a couple weeks I was contacted that I was approved. The agency they picked contacted me to set up a date. Med Mart constructed the ramp within a couple of hours. I now have access to the back of my home. I asked them if they wanted me to promote their organization,

and they encourage me to do so. Here are some pictures of my shiny new ramp. The organization is named Home For Veterans. And they are on Facebook. I hope this information is useful.

Have a great day.

Paul Mann

Paul Mann,

Board member and co Sports Director



SPORTS REPORT

BY: JOSH MALEY

Wow, have the past couple months just flown by! We start with the DAV Winter Sports Clinic At the end of March. As always, we had a big turn out for the Buckeye team, representing us in the best way on the slopes of Snowmass, Colorado. The variety of winter sports offered gives our members many opportunities to broaden their horizons of sporting activities that they participate in. Everything from fly fishing, to curling and of course adaptive skiing to Snowmobiling, the winter sports clinic has a lot to offer! If you are interested in attending these games, please contact your coach at the VA.

In April, the chapter once again hosted the Buckeye Wheelchair Games at The Spire institute in Geneva. The Buckeye games bring over 100 athletes, coaches, and caregivers from all across the state to compete over the weekend in over a dozen disciplines. This year, we also had two exhibitions, pickleball and disc golf, which were huge crowd pleasers. We would like to thank Play It Again Sports for helping connect us with major brands like Innova, Discraft and Trash Panda to facilitate the donation of 5 baskets and over 100 discs. We also would like to thank Keybank, Mobility Works, and the VA without whom these games would not be possible.

In May, FirstEnergy Stadium, home of the Cleveland Browns, opened their doors to the Cleveland VA and some of our members to have a cornhole tournament, refreshments, and food. A good time was had by all. We also had our Annual All You Can Eat fundraiser at the Berea VFW, giving us a great opportunity to get together and raise money for the chapter. Remember, our Chapter offers the Individual Sports Program (ISP) to members. The ISP is our chapters way of reimbursing athletes for travel, hotel, or registration at an athletic competition that is not already funded by the Buckeye Chapter. Please note: the ISP is for Competitions only, not for clinics or classes. The total reimbursement depends on your membership type, and the Chapter must be notified at least 30 days prior to the competition. We would appreciate it if you take pictures at your competition and possibly even write an article about your experience there. Please contact any Sports Committee member, board member, or the office for more details.

June 21st and 22nd, we will be hosting our annual Billiards tournament at Wickliffe Lanes in Wickliffe. If you are interested, please contact the office. Wickliffe Lanes is a great facility with plenty of pool tables, and they have been great to work with in the past for not only this tournament but also for bowling at the Buckeye Games.

Lastly, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be taking place in New Orleans July 25th through 30th. Unfortunately, Registration ended on April 5th, but we are hoping to see a big Buckeye turn out in the Big Easy. As always, we wish our veteran athletes safe travels and good luck.

On behalf of the Sports Committee, thank you ,and we hope to see you at future events.

Sincerely,



Josh Maley, Board member and co Sports Director



Buckeye Chapter
Paralyzed Veterans of America,
Buckeye Chapter

ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

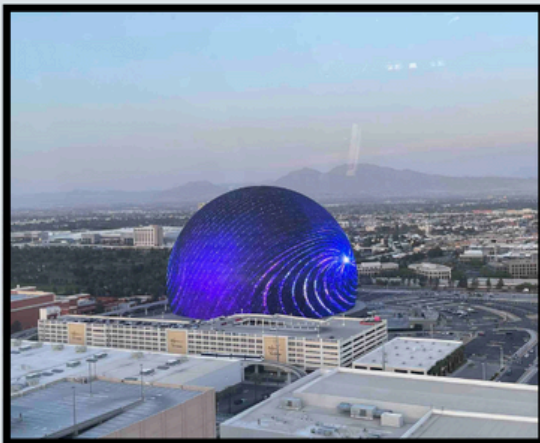
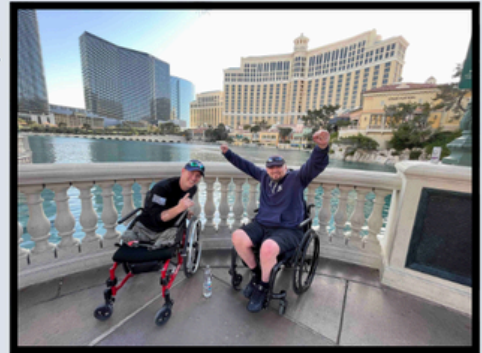
September 9, 2024
Bunker Hill Golf Course
Medina, Ohio

SAVE
THE
DATE

JOIN US FOR A DAY ON THE GREEN

RUGBY SECTIONALS BY: PAUL MANN

Hello Buckeye PVA members, I'm Paul Mann, board member, and Co sports director. I recently traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada to play in the wheelchair rugby western sectionals with my team the Oscar Mike Militia. For a chance to play the wheelchair rugby National Championships in Florida in May. On the second day of competition, we secured our place in the championship with a last second win over the home Las Vegas team. It was a very intense match. The Militia were down by seven points going into the final period. We won by one point! Securing our spot for a chance to win a national championship. During the four days in Las Vegas, I went sightseeing. I've never been there and wanted to see as much as I could. Couple of the players were very familiar with Vegas and took me around to see the sights. I rode in the giant Ferris wheel that gave a great view of Las Vegas. I went to a concert I saw passing by. I was given a front row seat to watch the band, Bone Thugs and Harmony. I was able to see the



water show in front of the Mirage Hotel. We had plans to watch the Blue Man group show, but a long day of rugby caused us to miss it. Maybe if I make it back I'll go. After twelve plus hours on an airplane, I rushed home from the airport just in time for the eclipse.

Sincerely,

Paul Mann

Paul Mann,

Board member and co Sports Director





CAREGIVERS



Elizabeth Dole Foundation

CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Hidden Helpers

Caregivers are often assumed to be an adult; however, caregivers and those who support them vary in age, at times they are children in the household assisting with caregiving duties. One percent of our nation has opted to serve in the military, of that number, according to The White House and census data, there are approximately 2.3 million children in homes where the family dynamics are centered around their family member's illness, disease, or wounds. They are children, youth, and young adults under the age of 26 who are impacted by or involved in the care of a wounded, ill, injured service member, or veteran. The relationship may be a child, sibling, niece/nephew, grandchild, etc. who are mentally, physically, and emotionally bound in caregiving. The children within these criteria are known as "Hidden Helpers."

Children thrive when they learn skills at their level and grow from the experiences they encounter in life. They often live life one day at a time, basking in the adventures of life. Unfortunately, not everyone has the same opportunities or resources at their disposal. For some, reality is living in a household with a loved one who has devoted their life to military service, and in the process of serving faithfully, has sustained the wounds of war, disabilities, and disease. Most of the children in these families assist in caregiving responsibilities above and beyond what is expected at their age. Many grow up too fast, experiencing fear, anxiety, emotional pain, as well as loneliness, hurt, shame, and illnesses.

Sacrifices are made; while others enjoy being outside, these "Hidden Helpers" are physically and emotionally bound by the needs within the family. Their ability to socialize is impacted by responsibilities within the household. There are chores in addition to supporting their caregiver that include assisting with their Activities of Daily Living, overseeing other children in the household, and some help financially. There is an emotional price to be paid; many are isolated from their peers, their learning is impacted, and they may ensue health issues. For some, their schoolwork suffers, while others witness scenes in the home that are fragments of war experienced by their veteran. It is bittersweet, in the long run some miss out on pieces of their childhood in exchange for helping their hero and the family caregiver.

CAREGIVERS CONT.



There are positive attributes associated with Hidden Helpers. Many are empathetic to those who are disabled, elderly, and some interact with adults on a higher level than expected. On the other hand, some are introverted and choose not to interact directly with other children or adults. Some are patient with their veteran, while others may be resentful.

In the past, there was not much data or research to measure the full scope of caregiving on the lives of children, but many organizations have joined forces in response to the 2017 RAND Study; a motivating force to change our nation's perception of children living in homes where service members have been impacted by war or disabilities. The Elizabeth Dole Foundation chose to initiate the study and the research was funded by Wounded Warrior Project. The goal is to enlighten the nation on the contributions Hidden Helpers are making to our nation and to provide resources and services to ensure their future will be brighter and healthier.

Due to the attention given to their role in the caregiving equation, more programs, resources, and services have been established to support the children and provide them with the critical treatment they need to be seen, heard, and understood. Joining Forces, an interagency policy committee of many agencies of the federal government, The Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Wounded Warrior Project, USAA, The National Endowment for the Arts, Bob and Delores Hope Foundation, The Bob Woodruff Foundation, Blue Star Families, PsychArmor, TriWest Healthcare Alliance, and a host of others have acknowledged and supported these children with programs designed to recognize and support Hidden Helpers in caregiving families. To see a list of more supporters who have made significant contributions to Hidden Helpers, please go to hiddenheroes.org. These are quality programs providing peer support, mental health services and therapies, age-appropriate developmental programs, scholarships, grants, educational resources, and social events. May our Hidden Helpers experience full lives and be seen, understood, and acknowledged for the sacrifice they are making in their homes and to our nation.

Be well,

Jeanette Ezell

Jeanette Ezell, Ohio Dole Caregiver Fellow

Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

Eligibility Criteria Fact Sheet



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers enhanced clinical support for Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans.



Veteran Eligibility Requirements:

A Veteran or Service member may be eligible for a Family Caregiver if all of the following requirements are met:

- 1** The individual is either:
 - A Veteran; or
 - A member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge from the Armed Forces.
- 2** The individual has a serious injury (including serious illness) incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service.
 - For purposes of PCAFC, serious injury means any service-connected disability that: (1) Is rated at 70 percent or more by VA; or (2) Is combined with any other service-connected disability or disabilities, and a combined rating of 70 percent or more is assigned by VA.
- 3** The individual is in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on any one of the following:
 - An inability to perform an activity of daily living;
 - A need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury; or
 - A need for regular or extensive instruction or supervision without which the ability of the Veteran to function in daily life would be seriously impaired.
- 4** It is in the best interest of the individual to participate in the program.
- 5** Personal care services that would be provided by the Family Caregiver will not be simultaneously and regularly provided by or through another individual or entity.
- 6** The individual receives care at home or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.
- 7** The individual receives ongoing care from a Primary Care Team or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.





Family Caregiver Eligibility Requirements

A Family Caregiver must:

- 1 Be at least 18 years of age.
- 2 Be either:
 - The eligible Veteran's spouse, son, daughter, parent, stepfamily member, or extended family member; or
 - Someone who lives with the eligible Veteran full-time or will do so if designated as a Family Caregiver.
- 3 Be initially assessed by VA as being able to complete caregiver education and training.
- 4 Complete caregiver training and demonstrate the ability to carry out the specific personal care services, core competencies, and additional care requirements.

In addition, there must be no determination by VA of abuse or neglect of the eligible Veteran by the caregiver.



Stipend Levels:

The amount of the monthly stipend the Primary Family Caregiver is eligible to receive, is determined based on information gathered during VA's evaluation of the Veteran's personal care needs.

Level One: The Primary Family Caregiver's monthly stipend is calculated by multiplying the monthly stipend rate [Office of Personnel Management (OPM) General Schedule (GS) Annual Rate for grade 4, step 1, based on the locality pay area in which the eligible Veteran resides] divided by 12 multiplied by 0.625.

- For example, the GS rate at grade 4, step 1, in Dallas, Texas, for 2022 was \$34,916 annually.
- Thus, the monthly stipend amount for a Primary Family Caregiver of an eligible Veteran in Dallas, Texas, at this rate (\$34,916, divided by 12 multiplied by 0.625) was approximately \$1,818.54 in 2022.

Level Two: If VA determines the eligible Veteran meets the definition of "unable to self-sustain in the community" for the purposes of PCAFC, the designated Primary Family Caregiver's monthly stipend is calculated by multiplying the monthly stipend rate (OPM GS Annual Rate for grade 4, step 1, based on the locality pay area in which the eligible Veteran resides) divided by 12 multiplied by 1.00.

- For example, the GS rate at grade 4, step 1, in Dallas, Texas, for 2022 was \$34,916 annually.
- The 2022 monthly stipend amount for a Primary Family Caregiver of an eligible Veteran in Dallas, Texas, at this rate (\$34,916, divided by 12 multiplied by 1.00) was approximately \$2,909.67

Veterans and caregivers can find their local CSP Team by:



Calling the VA Caregiver Support Line **1-855-260-3274**
(Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET; Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm ET) Toll free



Using the CSP Teams locator at
www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp

To apply online, visit

<https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers>

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Members Birthdays

June

Clyde Triplett Edward Di Florio **Joseph Guffy**
 Khadijah Hakeem **David Miller** Donna Schmidt
Michael Krivos John Miller **Christopher Connelly**
 Brett Clingan **Brett Velandar** Leonard Lemmo **James Ford**
John Trimbath John Richards **Gene Crumpton** Curt Lucas **Eric Hall**
 Glenn Grismere **Michael Stikeleather** Mark Morrison **Darryl Eppinger**
Jason Ware John Streets **Steven Lake** Richard Ackerman
 Rodney Hissong **William Joyce** Thomas Patterson **Kenneth Yoakum**
Terrence Menefee Houston Safford **Jennifer Steele** Philip Sulak
 Kimberly Byers **Larry Bostic Jr.** Don Crago

July

Joshua Maley **William Maguire** Tara White **Roger Stonebraker**
Jaime Heverly John Kiss **Phillip Sims** Robert Hagara **Donald Paige**
 David Beck **Charles Thompson** Alton Taylor **Samuel Johnson** John Myers
Robert Davis James Keltz **Michael Payne** Louis Vernon **Cynthia Strong**
 Anthony Zampino **Howard Snyder** William Oates **Stephen Kinder** William Shorts
John Myers Terry Clark **Will Wilder** William Anderson **James Maytas** John Arnesen
 Michael McQuillen **Jacob Rinehart** Herman Benson **William King** Thomas Habart
William Nolte Gary Schweikert **James Markham** Sojourn Jones **Bennie Foggin**
 Larry Kelly **Ralph Wellendorf** Timothy Calvin **Robert Burtin** William Wheeler
Andrew Shienkaruk Carol Eaves **Kevin Weilacher** Steven Mullikin
 Johnny Maddox **Robert Hewitt** William Cornwell **Steven Holder**
Rick Takacs Michael Cunningham **Todd Mix** Eric Owen
 Timothy Lacour **Robert Thomas** Blaine Denious **Robert Weber**

August

Robert Mills Allen Frye **Terrence Graves** Larry Shifferly
 Stanley Kolby **James Moorman** Arsenio Rodriguez
Keith Dunseith Larry Benner **Steve Sigourney** Dan Sidick
 John Duncan **Michael Snyder** Harold Pittaway **Denise Smith**
Sylvester Cooper Gary Swickard **William Beekman** Terry Beasley
 Brian Fyffe **Joe Ryan** Robert Hill **John Edwards** Robert Mace **Kenneth Parker**
William Patterson Harry Clay **Michael Brook** Ralph Owens **Dale Dalrymple**
 Felix Castro **Stephen Bell** Ronald Baltes **Dale Lomax** Mark Boyd
Philip Nechvatal Timothy Houston **Gayle-Jayne Allyson**
 Thomas Shipp **Fefiloi Noa** Christopher Tinsley



Issue 9 • Volume 32

May 20, 2024

Washington Update

Check out the [PVAAction Force](#) page to view alerts and a list of key legislation.

Veterans Omnibus Introduced

After months of waiting, a comprehensive legislative package of veterans-related bills has finally been introduced. H.R. 8371, the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, combines several bipartisan and bicameral proposals to reform and improve the delivery of healthcare, benefits, and services at the VA for veterans, their families, and survivors into a single package. Provisions in H.R. 8371 would expand economic opportunities for veterans, improve mental health care access, and facilitate better oversight of the VA by Congress. Most important, the bill includes the entire Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act which:

- Increases the expenditure cap for noninstitutional care alternative programs from 65 percent to 100 percent of nursing home care costs;
- Expands access to VA's home and community-based services to veterans at all VA medical facilities, as well as to veterans living in U.S. territories and Native veterans enrolled in the Indian Health Service or tribal health programs;
- Requires the creation of a centralized website to disseminate information and resources related to home and community-based programs and help veterans and caregivers determine their eligibility;
- Requires the VA to review staffing and resource needs, accessibility, and other aspects of the Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care and the Caregiver Support Program Office to make certain they are appropriately serving veterans and their caregivers;

- Creates a pilot program to provide home health aide services for veterans that reside in communities with a shortage of home health aides; and
- Requires the VA to establish a warm handoff process for veterans and caregivers who are discharged from or ineligible for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

The bill also contains revised language from the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act (H.R. 1815/S. 495), which would test VA's ability to pay for veterans care at assisted living facilities. Currently, the VA can refer veterans to assisted living facilities, but it cannot directly pay for that care. Language in H.R. 8371 would allow VA to carry out a three-year pilot program, no later than two years after enactment for 60 eligible veterans in two Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to assess the effectiveness of providing assisted living services to eligible veterans and assess the satisfaction of the program. At the conclusion of the pilot program, participating veterans will be given the option to continue receiving assisted living services at their assigned site, paid for by the VA. We believe this would help veterans and the VA alike by giving greater access to assisted living and reducing costs for long-term care, allowing more veterans to receive needed assistance.

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Initially, the plan was to bring the bill to the House floor on or about May 21, but growing opposition to the bill within the chamber coupled with administrative challenges delayed action on the bill until early June. PVA is greatly disappointed with the decision, and is working with congressional members and VSO partners to make sure this bill is placed back on the calendar and swiftly passed.

HVAC Holds Markup Session

On May 1, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) held a lengthy markup where several bills of interest were examined and approved. They include:

- H.R. 6324, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Authorization Act, which would authorize the VA to carry out 11 major medical facility projects during FY 2024 and sets maximum spending amounts for each one of them. PVA wholeheartedly supports this legislation which authorizes more than \$300 million to support the ongoing construction of a new SCI/D acute and long-term care center and related facilities at the San Diego VA Medical Center.
- H.R. 7150, the Survivor Benefits Delivery Improvement Act of 2024, which would direct the VA to collect demographic data on the survivor population. PVA believes this change would help the department and Congress better understand the utilization of survivor-related benefits and services. It also directs the VA to develop an outreach program for survivors, similar to the Solid Start program, to make sure that every survivor knows what benefits are available to them.
- H.R. 7342, the Veterans Accessibility Advisory Committee Act of 2024, which would create a Federal Advisory Committee on Accessibility tasked with improving accessibility concerns, especially related to infrastructure and technology, throughout the VA. PVA helped develop this legislation, which would bring disability experts, disabled veterans service organizations, accessibility experts within VA staff, and other contributors together to identify accessibility barriers within the department and provide solutions to address them. With various experts sitting on the advisory committee, each aspect of accessibility could be highlighted and given the attention they need in order to reduce physical and technological barriers for our nation's veterans.

Several bills scheduled to be examined at this hearing could not be considered since the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had not yet issued a score. They included PVA endorsed H.R. 3225, the BUILD for Veterans Act, which seeks to improve staffing to manage construction of VA's assets and ensure that there are concrete plans to improve the planning,

management, and budgeting of VA construction and capital asset programs. H.R. 6373, the Veterans STAND Act, was also put on hold due to the lack of a score and concerns about potential amendments to the original language. PVA was involved in the development of the bill, which would ensure all veterans with SCI/Ds are offered an annual medical exam and make certain veterans are made aware of assistive technologies they may be eligible for during these annual evaluations.

FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 Signed Into Law

On May 16, the President sign the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 into law. The Reauthorization includes several PVA-supported provisions focused on addressing the experience of air travel passengers with disabilities. Specific sections in the new law include training requirements for assisting passengers with limited mobility and properly stowing assistive devices; analyzing and improving the Department of Transportation's (DOT) complaint process; addressing the need for more access standards and accessibility of inflight entertainment, as well as improved access to airline websites, applications, and information communication technologies; and increasing access to seating accommodations.

The FAA Reauthorization Act also requires continued study into safe and secure in-cabin wheelchair tie-down systems, and if technically feasible, a study into their economic and financial feasibility; the need for DOT to perform a more in-depth analysis of airline-reported mishandled wheelchair data; and reauthorization of the Air Carrier Access Act Advisory (ACAA) Committee, as well as a requirement for the ACAA Committee to ensure safe transport for assistive devices powered by lithium-ion batteries. In addition, we were pleased to see the inclusion of a pilot grant program to increase airport accessibility and requirements for adult changing tables; new requirements related to the availability of onboard wheelchairs; expansion of the Advanced Materials Center of Excellence to address safe and accessible air travel for passengers with disabilities; and the creation of a known service animal pilot program. Moving forward, we will continue to work with champions in Congress to improve enforcement of the ACAA. We will also work with DOT on implementation of the FAA's requirements to ensure the safety and

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dignity of passengers with disabilities.

HHS Issues Final Rule Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

On May 6, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through its Office for Civil Rights, finalized a rule, *Discrimination on the Basis of Disability in Health and Human Service Programs and Activities*, to update its prohibition against discrimination on the basis of disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504, passed over 50 years ago, prohibits disability discrimination in programs and activities run by federal agencies or that receive federal financial assistance.

The final rule clarifies the application of 504 to several areas, such as medical care; accessible medical equipment, including adopting the U.S. Access Board's standards for accessible medical equipment; value assessment methods; web and mobile accessibility; and integration. The rule also updates Section 504 to improve consistency with developments in the Americans with Disabilities Act, such as permitting service animals and maintenance of accessible features. For more information, HHS published a fact sheet on the final rule. The rule will take effect on July 8, 2024.

SVAC Hearing on the President's Proposed VA Budget for FY 2025 and Advanced Appropriations for FY 2026

On May 1, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a hearing on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget request for the VA. Secretary Denis McDonough testified before the committee.

Secretary McDonough stated the VA is delivering more care and benefits to more veterans than at any time in the department's history. They have enrolled more than 12,500 veterans under its PACT Act authority alone in the past year. He highlighted the fact that 29 million telehealth visits were provided during that same time. This is in addition to over 118 million clinical visits, 47 million of which were in the community and 42 million in person at VA facilities. He briefly mentioned the wide range of care, benefits, and services the VA has provided to veterans, including Veterans Benefits Administration

benefits, preventing veteran suicide, ending veteran homelessness, supporting care for women veterans, modernizing information technology systems, processing benefits, and honoring veterans with their final resting places. The Secretary also noted that the American healthcare landscape has changed in the last six years. The pandemic and multiple major new statutes have led to monumental change for the VA.

Roscoe Butler, PVA's Senior Health Policy Advisor, discussed the Independent Budget's (IB) recommendations for VA Health Care. He noted how VA's reliance on community care has risen dramatically stating, "While we agree that veterans must have non-VA options to fill gaps in care, we believe VA must remain the primary provider and coordinator of veterans' care. While VA is requesting an overall increase for medical care, the community care program is growing at a faster rate than VA-provided care."

Lastly, he voiced concerns about the VA's plans to reduce the number of full-time employees in FY 2025 by 10,000, and the VA's projected use of \$12.7 billion in carryover funding rather than requesting new discretionary appropriations stating, "If VA's unobligated balance at the end of FY 2024 is less than projected, it could trigger a funding shortfall next year."

You can read the IB's statement and watch a video of the hearing here.

U.S. Attorney's Office Reaches Settlement with Maryland Hotel Owner

On May 2, the Department of Justice announced it reached a settlement agreement with AHIP MD Baltimore 5015 Enterprises LLC, the owner of a Hilton Garden Inn at White Marsh, located in White Marsh, Maryland, to resolve alleged violations of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The agreement stems from an ADA complaint alleging an individual with a disability and relative were provided a room that was not accessible after previously reserving an accessible room, resulting in serious injury to the individual. The ADA protects

individuals with disabilities when traveling and requires hotels to provide equal access to their rooms and facilities. The complaint led to an investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland.

Roundtable to Discuss VA Outreach Letters

Recently, PVA participated in a roundtable discussion on improving VA outreach letters received by veterans. The discussion included several VA employees from the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the Veterans Benefits Administration, as well as members of the House Veterans' Affairs Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee.

In March, the subcommittee held an oversight hearing on how VA's disability claims and appeals letters should be simplified. During the hearing, the Chairman Morgan Luttrell (D-TX) suggested a working group and listening sessions to get stakeholder feedback on concerns about VA's outreach letters to veterans.

During the roundtable, we stressed the need for clarity in decision letters, citing several examples provided to us by our field staff, and pressed the VA to continue to engage with the veterans service organizations (VSO) in the improvement process. Other concerns were raised such as the need for increased auditing of outreach materials to improve accuracy, the prioritization of communications that may have a higher likelihood of miscommunication, and ensuring that the VA puts the veteran first in all changes.

This was the first roundtable discussion on the topic and there are likely to be several more. It will be a long process to review and adjust all of the letters, but the VA is working hard to identify and address concerns raised by VSOs and Congress.

News of Note

Comment Period Extended for DOT Proposal on Improving the Air Travel Experience for Wheelchair and Scooter Users

WHO: PVA needs you to help us keep #PushingAccessForward.

WHAT: Send your comments in response to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) proposed changes to the Air Carrier Access Act rules that would improve the air travel experience for wheelchair and scooter users.

WHEN: Previously due May 13. Now open until June 12, 2024.

WHERE: Federal Register : Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers With Disabilities Using Wheelchairs.

WHY: The disability community needs to let the DOT know why better training is needed to stop injuries and wheelchair damage, and why you need your assistive device fixed or replaced as soon as possible if it's damaged or lost.

HOW: Leave comments on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) and post on social media to share stories about your #Flightmares and why air travel must improve for wheelchair and scooter users.

House Passes Four Veteran Bills

On April 30, the House passed four pieces of veteran-related legislation, which will allow them to head to the Senate for additional input and review. Perhaps the most significant bill was H.R. 3738, the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration Act. This bill would create a fourth administration under the VA that focuses on issues such as the G.I. Bill and other education programs, and the vocational readiness and employment (VR&E) program. Many advocates believe that creating a new administration to address education and employment benefits will result in improved monitoring and oversight, as well as policy and legislative improvements. PVA supports this legislation, hoping that it would allow the Veterans Benefits Administration to focus on benefits delivery and improvements.

HHS Issues New Rule Under Section 1557 of the ACA

On May 6, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published their final rule, Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities, regarding section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act

(ACA). Section 1557 of the ACA prohibits discrimination on the bases of disability and other protected classes in covered health programs or activities. The rule requires covered health care providers, insurers, grantees, and others to let people know that accessibility services are available to patients at no cost. The rule also clarifies that nondiscrimination in health programs and activities continues to apply to the use of artificial intelligence, clinical algorithms, predictive analytics, and other tools. This rule will be effective on July 5, 2024.

SVAC Women Veterans Roundtable

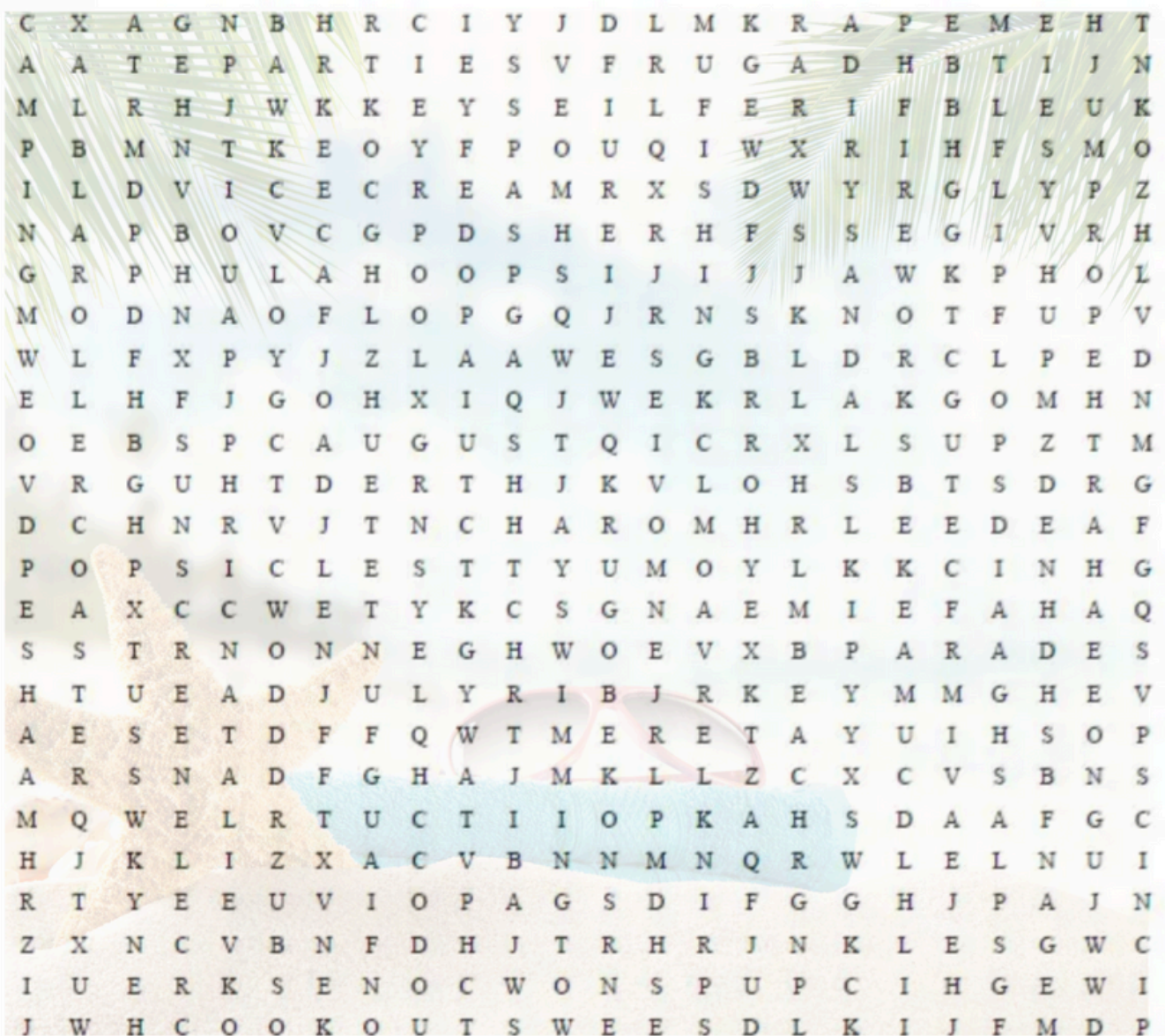
As a follow up to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) hearing last month on women veterans, Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT) held a roundtable discussion to hear the concerns of other organizations that were unable to testify at the hearing. Julie Howell, Associate Legislative Director, testified on behalf of PVA at the hearing, but attended the roundtable to learn from the organizations represented at the event. We hope this roundtable will be the first of many discussions where Senators can hear about concerns for women veterans in a more informal way.

Webinars & Hearings

Reminder: Advocacy Training Webinars Available

PVA's five-part series, "The 5 W's: The who, what, where, why, and when of our government and the art of advocacy," is available on [PVA.org](https://pva.org). You can learn more about the Fundamentals of Government, the Legislative Process, Stakeholders of Advocacy, Understanding the Issues and Becoming a Change Agent, and Connecting the Dots. If you have any questions about the series, please contact PVA Grassroots Advocacy Manager Lisa Elijah at LisaE@PVA.org.

SUMMER WORDSEARCH



AUGUST
BEACH
BIKES
CAMPING
CARNIVAL
COOKOUTS
FIREFLIES
FIREWORKS
FISHING
FLIPFLOPS

FUN
HULA HOOPS
ICE CREAM
JULY
JUMPROPE
JUNE
MOVIES
PARADES
PARTIES
PICNICS
POOL

POPSICLES
ROLLERCOASTER
SANDALS
SPLASH
SPRINKLER
SNOWCONES
SUNGLASSES
SUNSCREEN
SWIMMING
THEME PARK
VACATION

Who is eligible to participate in the program?

Must be a BPVA Member in good standing for a minimum of 90 days to participate. The Committee has the option to make exceptions for extenuating circumstances.

What is the acceptable time period before the program becomes available for use?

The BPVA member must be hospitalized for a minimum of one week.

What is the acceptable distance for mileage reimbursement?

The mileage reimbursement will be given to visitors for travel to a VA hospital in the State of Ohio for the well-being of members who are hospitalized. Beginning and ending travel must be in the State of Ohio.

How much is the reimbursement?

Reimbursement will be at a rate of .20 per mile. Mileage will be determined via MapQuest based on the submission of the visitor of the beginning and ending address. Chapter will reimburse up to 2 trips per month with a \$2,000 cap per year.

Reimbursement request containing the name of the member, name and address of the visitor, the date of visitation and the origin of the trip must be submitted by the 20th of the following month, with payment at the end of month. Request for reimbursement will only be valid for one calendar month following travel.

How will reimbursement be paid?

Reimbursements will be via check.

What locations are included in the program?

Reimbursement will be for Ohio VA hospitals only.

MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT



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Looking to get your information out to the Paralyzed Veteran Community? Look no further than advertising with Buckeye PVA in the Buckeye Banner! The Buckeye Banner is published quarterly and is filled with event updates, special offers for our Paralyzed Veterans, and even ads for companies and products built to improve the lives of our members! If you would like to advertise in the Buckeye Banner, ads must be purchased by September 30, 2024! Artwork for ads must be submitted to the Buckeye Banner Editor, Sarah Hoffman 1 month prior to publishing date of each newsletter. If you do not have the artwork for your ad, artwork can be created by Editor for an additional charge.

Advertising Rates for the Buckeye Banner:

1 Full Page Color for 1 fiscal year* (4 issues).....	\$3,500
1 Full Page B/W for 1 fiscal year* (4 issues).....	\$3,000
1 Half Page Color for 1 fiscal year* (4 issues).....	\$2,000
1 Half Page B/W for 1 fiscal year* (4 issues).....	\$1,500
1 Quarter Page Color for 1 fiscal year* (4 issues).....	\$1,000
1 Quarter Page B/W for 1 fiscal year* (4 issues).....	\$750

1 Full page Color for 1 quarterly issue**.....	\$1,000
1 Full page B/W for 1 quarterly issue**.....	\$850
1 Half page Color for 1 quarterly issue**.....	\$600
1 Half page B/W for 1 quarterly issue**.....	\$475
1 Quarter page Color for 1 quarterly issue**.....	\$400
1 Quarter page B/W for 1 quarterly issue**.....	\$300

***Ads purchased for an entire fiscal year are up for renewal on September 30th. Ads can be updated throughout the year and issues are released the first week of December, March, June and November**

****Ads purchased for 1 quarterly issue must be submitted 30 days prior to release dates**

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7233 Industrial Pkwy
Plain City, OH 43064
614-289-8138

Dayton
214 Valley St.
Dayton, OH 45404
937-998-1716

Sharonville
11755 Mosteller Rd.
Sharonville, OH 45241
513-686-1151

Toledo
1020 Laskey Rd.
Toledo, OH 43612
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www.mobilityworks.com



Emergency Assistance Program

Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter has available an Emergency Assistance Program.

This program helps members of the Buckeye Chapter who may find themselves in financial distress causing possible eviction from their homes, disconnection of utilities or the inability to pay for food.

Members must be in good standing for a mini-mum of 90 days prior to qualifying for consider-ation. Application for help is limited to twice

yearly or up to a maximum of \$500 per year. This is a confidential process. Payments must be made directly to the vendor. Please contact the Chapter office for more details. (800) 248-2548 or (216) 731-1017.



VA Emergency Care

In most instances, Veterans are eligible to receive VA authorized emergency care at an in-work facility if the VA is notified of the emergency event within 72 hrs. Veterans do not need to check with the VA before going to an emergency department in the community or calling an ambulance and, during an emergency, veterans are encouraged to seek medical attention without delay. To simplify and streamline this emergency care notification process, VA established a national emergency care contact center. This center allows community providers to report instances of a Veteran presenting to a community emergency department and offers simplified access to VA for care co-ordination, eligibility determination, and payment authorization information. The person notifying the VA should be prepared to supply case-specific information, as seen below.

- For more information please visit:
https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10143g_Non-VA_Hospital_Emergency_Notification_Fill.pdf

- For information about care coordination, documentation submission, eligibility, claims and payments visit:
https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/info_EmergencyCare.asp

Veteran Information	Treating Facility Information
Name	National Provider Identifier (NPI)
Social Security Number	Name
Date of Birth	Address
Address	Point of Contact (POC) Name
Date Presenting to Facility	POC Phone#
Date of Discharge	POC Email Address
Admitted? (YES/NO)	Note: POC will receive VA authorization decision info
Chief Complaint/Admission DX and/or Discharge DX	

Please cut around the dotted line to keep this important information with you at all times

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Turn Your Used Vehicle Into Support for Paralyzed Veterans of America

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

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Vehicle donations to PVA are tax-deductible! Most vehicles are sold through local used-car markets. Our vehicle donation program works to get the highest return per vehicle and handles all the paperwork, too! Whether your vehicle sells for \$500 or less, more than \$500, or more than \$5000, you will be provided with the proper donation tax receipt(s).



Call 877-900-VETS or donate online at pva.careasy.org

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Or visit www.buckeyepva.org

