

Buckeye Banner

Summer 2025



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

July 4th: Independence Day

July 17th-22nd : NVWG
(National Veteran Wheelchair Games)

August 7th : All You Can Eat Picnic



Chain of Command

BPVA Officers

Milton Young, President	miltony@buckeyepva.org
Larry Bostic, Vice President	larryb@buckeyepva.org
Holly Koester, Secretary	hollyk@buckeyepva.org
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DISCLAIMER

The Buckeye Banner is a publication of the Buckeye Chapter, PVA, and is 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 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



@buckeyePVA



President's Report

Paralyzed Veterans of America Buckeye Chapter is proud to announce that our chapter president, Milton Young, received the Richard Fuller Award for Outstanding Achievement in Government Relations from the Paralyzed Veterans of America. The award was presented at the recent PVA National Convention in Austin, Texas.



The chapter nominated Milton for the award due to his years of work championing accessibility in Canton, Ohio. In his hometown, Milton is well-known for his tireless advocacy. He is a member of the City of Canton Board of Zoning appeals and has regular meetings with the Mayor and Congressional Leaders regarding accessibility issues. Milton's efforts were covered in a 2016 article in the Canton Repository when he worked with then City Engineer Dan Moeglin to address the need for improvements to many of the City's sidewalks and curbs. His work with Moeglin, now the Director of Stark Parks, was again highlighted when together they brought about the paving of 3-mile section of trail that connects several Canton city parks.

During his years with Buckeye PVA, Milton has served in a variety of roles including Government Relations Director, Hospital Liaison Officer and Peer Mentor. In his work on the Spinal Cord Injury floor of the Cleveland VA Medical Center, Milton shows patients that they have someone who not only will listen and understand what they are going through but also is willing to fight for their rights. Milton was elected to the Board of Directors of the Buckeye PVA in 2020, serving as Vice President and then, beginning in 2024, as the Chapter President.



A football player for two seasons at the University of Findlay, Milton has competed in the Chapter's Buckeye Wheelchair Games and the National Veterans Wheelchair Games since 2009. Milton has served as a consumer advocate reviewer for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs' Spinal Cord Injury Research Program (SCIRP) through the Department of Defense, a role of which he became aware due to an email from PVA. Milton served in the Air Force from 1981 to 1986. In July of 2003, Milton experienced a life-changing fall from a bicycle. Milton joined the Paralyzed Veterans of America Buckeye Chapter in 2005.

Milton enjoys being active and coaching football, where he mentors young men on life, being a good man, father, and person, pushing all people to give back to other people. Milton has said, "My injury has really let me know how much inner strength God blessed me with."

When he's not helping people, Milton enjoys relaxing on his patio, barbecuing and spending time with his family.

Executive Director Report

Hello Friend of Buckeye PVA!

I just celebrated my one-year anniversary as the Executive Director of Buckeye PVA. I have spent my entire professional career working in the nonprofit sector, mainly in the social service and mental health areas. Guess when I learned about the Paralyzed Veterans of America for the first time? Believe it or not, when I applied for this job!!!

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a lot of work to do to raise awareness of this organization. Our partners at Paralyzed Veterans of America in Washington are working hard at this. But at the end of the day, it's our efforts in Ohio, in our individual communities and in one on one conversations that make the most difference.

Here in the office, one way we are working on raising our profile is by building our mailing list. We are reaching out to more organizations that serve veterans and are interested in veterans' causes to let them know we're here. We are actively engaging with members and prospective members in numerous locations throughout the state.

We have a new "QR" code that people can scan with their phone and it takes them right to our mailing list so new people can easily sign up.



We are always on the lookout for places that can host a Buckeye PVA table at events around the state.

We are active on social media and share information with traditional media outlets when we have newsworthy information to share.

Please use your own personal channels to share information about us and share with our office information you may have on organizations, businesses and individuals you think would welcome hearing from us or opportunities for us to get out and meet the public.

Thank you for your support and involvement. You are our inspiration and why we are here.

Kind regards,

Betsey Kamm

Betsey Kamm, Executive Director





Benefits Update

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Center for Faith

VA Center for Faith (VA CF)

VA makes it easier for Veterans to use community care Access to non-VA care no longer requires secondary approval

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs today announced changes that will make it easier for VA-enrolled Veterans to access health care from non-VA providers at the department’s expense.

Since 2019, the MISSION Act has enabled VA-enrolled Veterans to access health care from non-VA providers at the department’s expense when it is in their best medical interest. These decisions have been made jointly by Veterans and their referring clinicians but were not considered final until they were reviewed by a second VA doctor.

Effective immediately, VA will implement language in the [Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act](#) that removes this extra review step. The change will give eligible Veterans faster access to community care.

“Under President Trump, VA is providing Veterans with more health care choices than ever before,” said *VA Secretary Doug Collins*. “Now, we’re making it even easier for Veterans to get their health care when and where its most convenient for them. We are putting Veterans first at the department, and that means placing a premium on customer service and convenience. This important change will help us do just that.”

Background

Since 2019, the MISSION Act has given eligible Veterans the option of seeking community care outside VA when they meet any one of six conditions:

- When it is in the best medical interest of the Veteran.
- The care required is not available at a VA medical facility.
- The Veteran lives in a state or territory that does not have a full-service VA facility
- VA cannot meet wait time or distance standards:
 - VA cannot offer an appointment within 20 days for primary care, mental health or non-institutional extended care, or within 28 days for specialty care.



Constant Contact Sign Up



By using this QR Code, you can get sign up for our mailing list! You'll get updates about any news or updates going on at the BPVA!

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



ALLOW US TO INTRODUCE YOU TO YOUR PEAK PERFORMANCE

SPIRE FIT

SPIRE FIT is a community fitness and aquatics center open to everyone. FIT offers a variety of family, individual, military and senior memberships for those who desire a 'best in class' workout environment. Health, wellness and exercise are at the center of the SPIRE vision and FIT promotes the values of these components for all members.



- > **FIT MEMBERSHIP**
Family, individual, military
- > **SENIOR MEMBERSHIP**
Silver Sneakers, Renew Active
- > **PICKLEBALL**
Member discounted rates
- > **LEAGUES**
Adult and youth - member discounted rates
- > **ADRENALINE MONKEY**
Member discounted rates

Buckeye Wheelchair Games Recap

Hello Buckeye PVA members, the 2025 Buckeye Wheelchair Games took place the 10th through 13th of April. They were a huge success, and we had roughly 50 to 60 participants. Out of those 50-60 participants, we had several novices. The Games were fully funded this year thanks to the work of Betsey and Sarah in the BPVA office. The event started Thursday evening with all the participants and coaches arriving for registration. We were treated to a dinner catered by Applebee's. After dinner, we retired for the evening to be ready for the start of Friday. Friday morning started with members heading to the bowling alleys and to SPIRE for events like track and field, bowling, air rifles, billiards, and pickleball. The events ran through the day and we ate lunch and dinner at the fuel center inside the SPIRE Academy. After dinner, we headed back to the hotels for rest. Saturday morning started with weightlifting, cornhole, some more air rifle, and archery. After lunch, we ran our last few events. Boccia, disc golf and table tennis were some of the events that concluded the games. After, we headed upstairs for closing dinner and ceremonies. We had a presentation of the colors by the Madison American Legion. The national anthem was preformed by the Geneva High School Choir. Our Keynote speaker was Lorie Rupert from the Oscar Mike foundation. She shared information with the veterans about different programs and organizations that are there to use. We also had guest speaker, Jill Dietrich Mellon as well. After our speakers, we handed out awards for our sponsors and our athletes. The Spirit of the Games award went to Tony Burnette. Josh Fry won Best Male Athlete, and Best Female Athlete went to Kristina Croniser. Now we plan on taking these good spirits to Minneapolis, Minnesota in July for the National Veterans Wheelchair games. We will have all of these events, and the addition of team sports like basketball, softball, and rugby. Next year the Buckeye Wheelchair Games will be a few weeks later, towards the end of April. If these type of sports interest you, we hope to see you next year.



Hope you're having a wonderful day,

Paul Mann

Paul Mann, Sports Director and Board Member

Ohio Warriors Crowned Back-to-Back Sled Hockey Champions!

The spirit of adaptive sports shone brightly as The Ohio Warriors sled hockey team clinched their second consecutive Championship title, rising to the top of the competition in Coral Springs, Florida. This monumental victory follows their equally impressive win in April 2024 in West Chester, PA, in 2024 solidifying their place as a dominant force in the sled hockey community.

The road to the 2025 championship was anything but easy, but showcased the team's unwavering determination. The Warriors started the tournament strong with a decisive win, to show the strength of the team. However, a stumble in their second game to Tampa Lightning meant the stakes were raised for their third matchup – a must-win to advance to the championship round. True to their resilient nature, The Ohio Warriors rose to the challenge, securing the victory needed to play for the title.

The championship game presented a familiar and challenging opponent: the Tampa Lightning. Armed with lessons learned from their previous encounter, The Ohio Warriors dug deep, overcoming the issues that had plagued them before. In a thrilling display of teamwork and strategic play, they emerged victorious with a commanding 3-1 win, sealing their back-to-back championship status.

This repeat success is even more remarkable considering the team's growth. The Ohio Warriors welcomed four new teammates this season, three of whom were entirely new to the sport of hockey. Their quick integration and contribution speak volumes about the supportive and inclusive environment fostered by the team and Coach Brandon Ryznar.



The Ohio Warriors roster that brought home the 2025 championship includes:

Coach: Brandon Ryznar

Players: Adam Harmon, Blake Sunagel, Bryan Brumfield, Craig Payne, Jason Miller, Jim Kerin, Josh Fry, Justin Detwiler, Laney Gooch, Larry Draugan, Michael Oglesbee, Rob Hall, Todd Fewell, Tom Wirth.

These consecutive victories are more than just medals; they are a powerful testament to the positive impacts of adaptive sports. They highlight the incredible athleticism, camaraderie, and sheer joy that sled hockey brings to its participants, inspiring not only fellow veterans but anyone looking to overcome challenges. Coach Brandon Ryznar had this to say about the team “ The team has come a long way. At one point, we struggled to simply get a shot on net. Now, we are winning back-to-back National Championships. This sport really offers an outlet to disabled vets. It lights a fire under them to achieve a common goal again and overcome adversity. Warrior programs like ours often provide a sense of community that these veterans lose after leaving the service. These back-to-back Championship wins aren't because we have the most talent on the ice. We win because these veterans refuse to quit. Just like in serving, they care more about the person to their left and to their right than they do about themselves. It's a team effort, and this team continues to demonstrate that year after year”.

If you're interested in learning more about The Ohio Warriors or exploring the incredible world of adaptive sports, you can reach out to the team on Facebook by searching for "The Ohio Warriors" or sending an email to ohiowarriorshockey@gmail.com. Come be part of the next chapter in this inspiring journey!





Sponsor Levels

\$5,000 PRESENTING

Logo or picture on the banner at registration and dinner. Special thank you before golf and dinner. Entitled to 3 foursomes to event and 6 additional dinner guests. Complimentary full page ad in 4 issues of Buckeye Banner Newsletter. Please email the names of the golfers, additional dinner guests, and high-resolution logo (300 dpi or higher) to chad@bunkerhillgc.com

\$2,500 PARTNER

Logo or picture on the banner at registration and dinner. Special thank you before golf and dinner. Entitled to 2 foursomes to event and 4 additional dinner guests. Complimentary half page ad in 4 issues of Buckeye Banner Newsletter. Please email the names of the golfers, additional dinner guests, and high-resolution logo (300 dpi or higher) to chad@bunkerhillgc.com

\$1000 FRIEND

Logo or picture on the banner at registration and dinner. Special thank you before golf and dinner. Entitled to 1 foursome to event and 2 additional dinner guests. Please email the names of the 4 golfers, 2 additional dinner guests, and high-resolution logo (300 dpi or higher) to chad@bunkerhillgc.com

\$750 BEVERAGE CART

8 1/2 X 11 Signage on the beverage cart thanking you for the beverages. Entitled to 2 dinner guests. Please email the names of 2 dinner guests and high-resolution logo (300 dpi or higher) to chad@bunkerhillgc.com

\$500 GOLF CART

8 1/2 X 5 1/2 Signage on the golf carts. Sponsor supplies miscellaneous merchandise (cozies, mouse pads, pens, business cards, or promotional items) usually with the sponsor's logo on them. We have suggestions to purchase if you don't have items. Call Chad Gibson 216-469-9241 for assistance on gifts and email high-resolution logo (300 dpi or higher) to chad@bunkerhillgc.com

\$300 PUTTING CONTEST SPONSOR

Many mentions thanking the sponsor during the contest & signage on the green.

\$100 HOLE

Signage on the tee of a given hole with the sponsor's name on it in text.

\$50 FAMILY

Personal donations with your name on a sign before and after golf.

To be a sponsor visit <https://birdease.com/pva2025> Or make checks payable to Bunker Hill Golf Course Memo line Paralyzed Veterans 2025 and your sponsorship level.

Mail to 3060 Pearl Rd., Medina Ohio 44256

***** Advertising receipts available upon request *****

Chad@bunkerhillgc.com 216-469-9241





Paralyzed Veterans of America Golf Outing *Monday, Sept. 8, 2025*

Golfers

- 8:00 Registration ~ Breakfast
- 9:00 18 Holes & Cart ~ Proximities ~ Skins
- 2:00 Steak Dinner ~ Awards

Dinner only Guests

- 1:30 Doors Open ~ Beverages Steak
- 2:00 Dinner ~ Music ~ Raffles

*\$135 per golfer or \$40 for dinner only if paid by Sept. 1
\$150 and \$45 (dinner only) after Sept. 1*

*Register online <https://birdease.com/pva2025>
or make checks payable to Bunker Hill Golf Course and
memo [Paralyzed Veterans 2025](#)*

Mail to 3060 Pearl Rd., Medina OH 44256

*Contact Chad Gibson: text 216-469-9241 or
chad@bunkerhillgc.com with questions*





14 TH ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025
Bunker Hill Golf Course, Medina, Ohio

Who are we?

The Paralyzed Veterans of America Buckeye Chapter is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving approximately 475 members in the state of Ohio. Our chapter is one of 33 chapters of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Membership is free to qualified individuals who are honorably discharged veterans with spinal cord injury, MS, or ALS. Most of our members are people with quadriplegia or paraplegia who use wheelchairs. Our chapter is celebrating its 53rd year serving our members.

What is this event?

We are actively preparing for this year's 14th Annual Golf Outing. The purpose of this event is to raise funds to allow us to continue to fulfill our mission.

How are sponsorship dollars used?

Buckeye PVA focuses on improving the quality of life of our members, through services including liaison at area VA hospitals, emergency assistance, and support making modifications to homes and vehicles in the aftermath of spinal cord injury or disease. Our chapter also provides a variety of adaptive athletic and social programs to benefit members.



How can you help?

BECOME A SPONSOR

The enclosed sponsor level flyer gives an overview of the benefits and features of all our event sponsorships. We appreciate support at any level.

Are there other ways to get involved?

PARTICIPATE IN THE EVENT

The enclosed golfer flyer gives you all the info you need. Please come join the fun! We'd love to have you! If you know a golfer, please share the information.

VOLUNTEER FOR THE EVENT

If you aren't a golfer but would like to come and help, please email me, Betsey Kamm, at betseyk@buckeyepva.org or call 216-731-1017.

To learn more about us and our programs, please visit our website at buckeyepva.org.

Caregivers



Elizabeth Dole Foundation

CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

We recently celebrated Memorial Day; a holiday dedicated to honoring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. Gratitude, respect, and admiration are felt as appreciation for the sacrifices made to ensure our protection and freedom; we will never forget those who made them. It is a reminder that life is fragile and may end without warning. In such cases, complex decisions must be made in preparation for the future.

The decision to plan for the day you may transition from caregiver to survivor seems unfathomable. Addressing life without your veteran comes with the unsettling thoughts of what will happen to the family if life takes a turn for the worse. Planning for end-of-life occurrences is one of the most dreaded tasks for caregivers and their families. The most peaceful outcomes are usually experienced by families that have set aside time and made efforts to fulfill their veteran's final wishes before a declaration of death. A well-timed, peaceful conversation is beneficial. Effective communication can provide relief when it is most needed.

The VA has strived to bring awareness to burial benefits available to veterans, active-duty service members, spouses, and dependent children. They also have benefits available for survivors of deceased service members and their families. Did you know that burial and memorial information is available in many formats; however, it is one of VA's most underutilized benefits? There is a pre-need assessment that can be completed before burial, and a VA document titled "Survivor's Assistance and Memorial Support Survivor Checklist" that is available as well. It includes arrangements, decisions, notifications, resources, documents to collect and secure, and more helpful information.

Services are offered for burial at VA National Cemeteries, including graveside services such as opening and closing the grave, as well as the maintenance of the headstone or marker. Veterans may also be entitled to a burial flag, a medallion, and military honors at their funerals. Eligible family members may request military funeral honors consisting of "Taps" being played and flag folding.

Eligible veterans, active-duty, retired reservists, and National Guard service members may have a headstone delivered by the VA free of charge to any national, state veterans, or private cemetery. Government headstones are available for spouses and dependent children if the decision is made to bury them in a national cemetery, military post or base, or tribal cemetery. The headstones and markers may be replaced under certain circumstances, such as deterioration, illegible wording, vandalism, or theft.



Caregivers



Elizabeth Dole Foundation

CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

There are VA brochures that provide detailed explanations of benefits and resources available at your local Veterans Affairs (VA) office. An example is the Veteran Headstones, Markers, and Medallions, which can be accessed at www.cem.va.gov/hmm/.

There are also online sources:

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/docs/VASurvivorsKit.pdf>

<https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/schedule-a-burial/>

Examples of other benefits available to eligible survivors include life insurance, VA Home Loan Guarantee for surviving spouses, and educational assistance.

email: officeofsurvivors@va.gov

Please be assured that planning can save time, but most importantly, planning will give you peace of mind at a time when it is most needed. If you would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact the VA Office of Survivors Assistance.

Be well,

Jeanette Ezell

Ohio Dole Caregiver Fellow

Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

Eligibility Criteria Fact Sheet



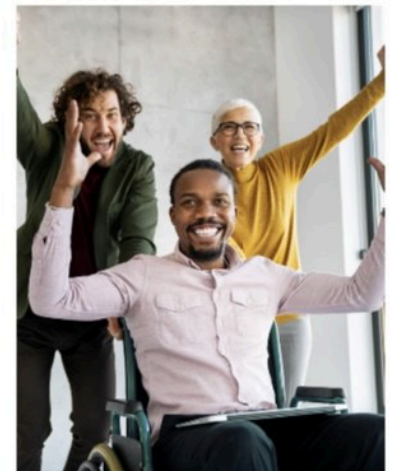
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers enhanced clinical support for Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans.



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.



To apply online, visit

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

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



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>



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

MEMBERS BIRTHDAYS

June

Brett Velander Richard Ackerman **Joseph Guffy**
 Michael Stikeleather **Don Crago** Clyde Triplett
Thomas Patterson James Ford **John Miller**
 Eric Hall **Kimberly Byers** Christopher Connelly
Franklin Jordan Leonard Lemmo **John (Jack) Richards**
 Khadijah Hakeem **Terrence Menefee** Brett Clingan
William Joyce Jason Ware **Edward Di Florio**
 Ricky Dubose **Larry Bostic Jr.** Mark Morrison
Steven Lake Jennifer Steele **Philip Sulak**
 Gene Crumpton **Bruce Ford** Leana Himes
Curt Lucas Kenneth Yoakum **John Streets**
 Anthony Whitlow **Kevin Deininger**

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Samuel Johnson Jr. Sojourn Jones **Steven Mullikin** Michael McQuillen
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 John Kiss **Louis Vernon** Gary Schweikert **David Beck** Terry Clark **William Anderson**
William Wheeler Roger Stonebraker **Cynthia Strong** Jacob Rinehart **Michael Payne**
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Richard Barr John Arnesen **James Markham** Howard Snyder
 Kimberly Hazly-Ward **Michael Cunningham** William Shorts Jr.
Alton Taylor Johnny Maddox **Carol Eaves** James Maytas Jr.
 Ralph Wellendorf **Rick Takacs** Todd Mix **Ronnie Duffin**

July

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

August



Issue 9 • Volume 33

May 19, 2025

Washington Update

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

SVAC HOLDS HEARING WITH VA SECRETARY

On May 6, VA Secretary Doug Collins made his first appearance since his confirmation before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC). In a rather contentious hearing, the VA Secretary made his case for the current state of the department.

Questions from the members often toed the political line with Democrats demanding answers on the announcement of up to 80,000 employees being cut through the proposed reduction in force memo widely circulated back in March. The Secretary told the Senate that VA would perform an analysis of non-critical positions across the department rather than use the proposed 80,000 as a goal. Many of the members urged the Secretary to carefully consider any additional cuts to VA staffing before implementing them.

When pressed about the firing of several thousand VA employees, the Secretary told Senators that those individuals who have been reinstated by the courts have already been returned to their jobs. Senators from both sides of the aisle reminded the Secretary that hiring, firing, and rehiring of critical staff across the VA does not illustrate a stable work environment and that being more considerate with all future cuts should be prioritized.

PRESIDENT SIGNS VETERANS-RELATED EO

On May 9, President Trump signed an Executive Order (EO) titled, "Keeping Promises to Veterans and Establishing a National Center for Warrior Independence." The order addresses issues related to access to services for homeless veterans and veterans' health care. Specifically, the EO directs the VA Secretary to designate a National Center for Warrior Independence on VA's West Los Angeles campus to address the needs of homeless veterans. It also directs the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to work with the VA to use housing vouchers to support homeless veterans in Los Angeles and around the country. Another section of the EO addresses accountability of VA employees and directs the Secretary to make full use of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

The EO also addresses steps the VA Secretary should take to improve the quality of and increase the options for VA care and services. Specifically, the EO directs the VA Secretary to submit a report to the President with plans to reduce wait times for VA care appointments. The order also directs the Secretary to conduct a feasibility study on expanding services to support a full-service VA medical center (VAMC) in New Hampshire. Currently, New Hampshire is the only state in the contiguous United States without a full-service VAMC. Finally, the order directs the VA Secretary to work with

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the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to develop a strategy to reduce access times and improved service delivery, as well as considering ways to serve veterans at military treatment facilities and military beneficiaries at VA.

THREE BILLS IN PLAY TO INCREASE HISA GRANT AMOUNTS

There are now three separate bills in play that seek to increase the VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant amounts. Each of the three bills are slightly different but all seek to increase the grant amount while also tying the grant to an inflationary index to address increased costs. All three bills contain language which states that veterans who exhausted their HISA benefit before the date of enactment will not be eligible for additional benefits regardless of the increases passed in the legislation.

The first bill, H.R. 2245, the Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act, introduced by Representatives Don Bacon (R-NE) and Gabe Vasquez (D-NM), increases the grant amount from \$6,800 to \$10,000 for service-connected veterans and increases the amount from \$2,000 to \$5,000 for non-service-connected veterans. This bill ties the grant amount to the Consumer Price Index.

The second bill is H.R. 3309, the Autonomy for All Disabled Veterans Act, introduced by Representatives Eric Sorensen (D-IL), Mark Takano (D-CA), and Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), which increases the grant amount for service-connected and non-service-connected veterans to \$10,000. This bill ties the grant to a residential home cost of construction index.

Lastly, S. 1644, the Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act, introduced by Senators Catherine Cortez-Masto (D-NV) and John Boozman (R-AR), increases the grant amount from \$6,800 to \$10,000 for service-connected veterans and increases the amount from \$2,000 to \$6,800 for non-service-connected veterans. The bill also ties the grant to a residential home cost of construction index.

PVA supports any efforts to improve the HISA grant and hopes that Congress will take action this year. You can stay up to date by visiting PVAction Force.

HVAC HOLDS FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP

On May 6, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) held a full committee markup to review 18 pieces of legislation. The six-hour session covered legislation that mostly focused on health care but there were bills from the Economic Opportunity, Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, and other subcommittees under consideration.

In his opening remarks, HVAC Chairman Mike Bost (R-IL) commented that very few of the more than 40 amendments offered by the minority were received in the 24-hour window that is generally accepted.

The bills that PVA had previously supported that were voted through committee were H.R. 980, the Modernizing the Veterans On-Campus Experience Act of 2025; H.R. 1364, the Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation (ASSIST) Act of 2025; H.R. 2201, the Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act; and H.R. 1041, the Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act of 2025.

You can watch the markup and find all relevant documents here.

ADMINISTRATION'S SPENDING PLAN BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE

The president's annual budget proposal provides detailed information about the government's spending and revenue plans for the upcoming fiscal year (FY). It outlines proposed federal spending, revenue levels, and policy priorities, which are then submitted to Congress for its consideration. It's an important part of the annual budget process because it reveals the administration's fiscal strategy, and it is used to allocate resources for various government functions like the defense of the nation or taking care of veterans.

The administration's formal FY 2026 budget proposal is still being finalized but the nation received a glimpse of what they intend to propose through a May 2 release of a budget summary commonly referred to as a "skinny budget." Instead of providing all the agency or program levels for each of the 12 funding areas for government operations, it only lists the total amount the administration plans to seek for each of these areas and a short breakdown of key increases and decreases within them. Bear in mind that like the official budget proposal itself, these are simply recommendations, so the numbers it includes are subject to change.

Presently, the administration intends to request \$1.7 trillion in federal spending for FY 2026. The VA, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Homeland Security are the three primary agencies that would receive increases. Looking at the proposed numbers for VA, it raises the department's funding by \$5.4 billion, which is about a four percent increase over the current year's spending levels. But it would be 17 percent if you took into consideration the administration's plan to fully fund (\$50 billion) the Toxic Exposure Fund (TEF) established under the PACT Act (P.L. 117-168).

Drilling down a bit further, the brief proposal adds about \$3.3 billion to VA's healthcare services, which includes a \$1.1 billion increase to fight veterans' homelessness. This, according to the official White House press release would empower the department to be directly responsible for programs and financial support helping homeless and at-risk veterans with rental assistance, augmenting VA's existing case management and support services, to help veterans get back on their feet.

The administration is also seeking nearly \$2.2 billion for the department's ongoing electronic health records (EHR) project. Facing significant challenges since its inception, the project has been largely stalled since the spring of 2023 while VA and the project contractor worked out serious problems at the six facilities where the new software had been deployed. Last December, VA indicated many of those problems had been resolved and the department would start rolling out the new EHR to four additional medical centers in mid-2026. Recently, VA increased the number of facilities to 13, and VA Secretary Doug Collins made accelerating the VA EHRM rollout one of his top priorities.

The administration's preliminary proposal does look to save money within the department, particularly with Information Technology (IT). In VA alone, there are over 1,000 distinct IT systems. Many of them are aging and in some cases, there are duplicative systems. Overall funding for IT would be reduced by about \$500 million with much of it coming from the elimination of those duplicative systems and pausing new contracts. The skinny budget doesn't give a proposed amount for IT, but it does say the amount the administration would be seeking will protect VA's core mission systems that deliver healthcare, benefits, and cemetery services to America's veterans.

DAMA HOLDS OVERSIGHT HEARING ON REDUCING IMPROPER PAYMENTS IN VA COMPENSATION AND PENSION BENEFITS

On May 14, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) conducted an oversight hearing to look at VA's efforts to reduce improper payments and excessive paperwork within the compensation and pension benefits program and efforts to reduce the wasting of taxpayers' dollars. PVA submitted a statement for the record addressing areas where technology could help to reduce overpayments. To read PVA's statement, [click here](#). The hearing is available for viewing [here](#).

NEWS OF NOTE

PVA Hosts U.S. Access Board at National Office

On April 29, PVA hosted public and federal members of the U.S. Access Board, as well as Executive Director Sachin Dev Pavithran and staff. PVA CEO Carl Blake provided attendees with a tour to showcase the accessibility features of PVA's national office. Following the meeting, PVA leaders met with the Board to discuss PVA's architecture, sports and recreation, and advocacy priorities. More information about the Access Board's efforts are available [here](#).

PVA Presents at Abilities Expo in New York Metro

On May 2, PVA Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley presented at the Abilities Expo in suburban New York City on improving access to air travel for people with disabilities. Ansley and Michele Erwin, President and Founder of All Wheels Up, spoke at a workshop titled, "Accessible Air Travel: Know Your Rights and Tips & Tricks!" Ansley focused on efforts in recent years at the national level to make improvements, including passage of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 and the Department of Transportation's final rule on improving the safety and dignity of wheelchair users in air travel. The workshop provided a great opportunity to educate members of the broader disability community about their rights in air travel and PVA's leadership of those efforts.

VA Announces Major Survivor Benefits Reforms

The VA has announced major changes in policy concerning survivors and dependents of deceased veterans. Starting this month, the VA will move the Office of Survivors Assistance from the Veterans Benefits Administration to the Office of the VA Secretary. In addition, the VA will create a team to

guide and assist eligible survivors through the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) process. Finally, the VA will begin working to identify ways to automate and simplify the DIC claims process.

Bipartisan and Bicameral ABC Act Reintroduced

Earlier this year, the bipartisan, bicameral Alleviating Barriers to Caregivers (ABC) Act was reintroduced by Representatives Kat Cammack (R-FL) and Seth Magaziner (D-RI), and Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), and Ed Markey (D-MA). Under the ABC Act, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Social Security Administration, and Children's Health Insurance Program would be required to review their eligibility, processes, procedures, forms, and communications and seek ways to simplify them to reduce the administrative burden on family caregivers. The legislation would then also require the agencies to submit reports on findings and strategies for improvement to Congress within two years of enactment. The agencies would need to seek input from family caregivers in their review and reporting. PVA supports the ABC Act and the elimination of red tape for family caregivers who interact with Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

Frank Bisignano Sworn-in as 18th SSA Commissioner

On May 7, the Social Security Administration (SSA) announced the swearing in of Frank Bisignano as the 18th Commissioner of Social Security. Previously, Bisignano served as the chairman and chief executive officer of Fiserv, a payments and financial technology company. Commissioner Bisignano has stated he plans to put beneficiaries first by bringing the Social Security's error rate down, eliminating overpayment issues, reducing the chronically long wait times Americans face when seeking help from the agency, and investigating why it takes so much time to process disability applications.

SURVEY & COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Southwest ADA Center Survey on the ADA

Did you know that this July 26 marks the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990—a landmark civil rights law that continues to shape access and equity in everyday life?

While progress has been made, the need to understand the ADA's ongoing impact—and the barriers that still exist—is more urgent than ever.

The Southwest ADA Center has created an anonymous survey to assess how far we've come and how far we still need to go. The survey results will be used to inform and guide technical assistance and policy recommendations related to the ADA. The survey closes on May 31, 2025. [Click here to participate.](#)

Veterans' Committee Activities

Please visit the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee webpages for information on previous and upcoming hearings and markups.

ADVERTISE WITH BUCKEYE PVA

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, 2025! 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**

Please contact Sarah at sarahh@buckeyepva.org or by telephone at 216-731-1017 to advertise with Buckeye PVA today!



Veterans Picnic

Thursday, August 7



4-6 pm - at Coe Lake

National Purple Heart Day

Meal ticket required: \$5 per person

Please contact (440) 822-3312 or

wspringer@cityofberea.org

**For BPVA Members contact office (216) 731-1017
to RSVP by July 25th and we will pay for your
ticket plus one guest**

Music by: Guitars 4 Veterans

BBQ by: 4 Seasons Catering

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No Veteran Walks Alone

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 their food.

Members must be in good standing for a minimum of 90 days prior to qualifying for consideration. 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


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

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



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Paralyzed Veterans Disaster Relief Fund

Paralyzed Veterans members who suffer demonstrable losses after a natural disaster, can file for financial assistance through Paralyzed Veterans Disaster Relief Fund. The fund offers a grant of up to \$1,500 and was established to give recovering members a jump start toward the road to recovery, whether that means replacing lost food and clothing, repairing a damaged roof, or restoring a flooded basement back to livable conditions.

Funds will only be provided to Paralyzed Veterans of America members.

Funds may be granted for:

- Transportation
- Temporary shelter
- Food
- Modifications for accessibility
- Prosthetic appliances
- Medical supplies

The funds will not be provided if other assistance has been provided to pay for the items in the request (insurance, FEMA, etc.). Funds will also not be approved to cleanup, fix, or replace damages not related to the member's primary dwelling.

A maximum of \$1,500 per individual will be granted. However, additional funding may be provided in extreme circumstances, upon review on a case-by-case basis. Each application will be evaluated for need. Maximum disbursements will not be made in all cases.

Please contact your local Paralyzed Veterans of America chapter to apply for relief. Once an application is received it will be reviewed by the Chapter President or designee, and the National Service Officer, and you will be contacted for a transfer of funds.

PVA was founded on a promise that we would never leave a fallen comrade behind. We still live by that ethos to this day. We are here to help you in this time of need.



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Since 1946, Paralyzed Veterans of America has been on a mission to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes. We've had a single-minded mission—to empower our brave men and women to regain what they fought for: their freedom and independence.

They returned to a grateful nation, but also to a world with few solutions to the challenges they faced. They made a decision not just to live, but to live with dignity as contributors to society. They created Paralyzed Veterans of America, an organization dedicated to veterans service, medical research and civil rights for people with disabilities.

Have an old car taking up space in your driveway? Donate it to Paralyzed Veterans of America!

HOW IT WORKS

1.



Call or complete the online donation form. Our helpful Donor Support Team is available 7 days a week.

2.



Schedule your free and convenient pick-up. In most cases, your vehicle can be picked up just about anywhere in the U.S. within 72 hours of completing the donation form.

3.



Receive a donation receipt. That's it! Vehicle donations are tax-deductible. You'll receive a donation receipt within 30 days of the sale of the vehicle.

MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

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.

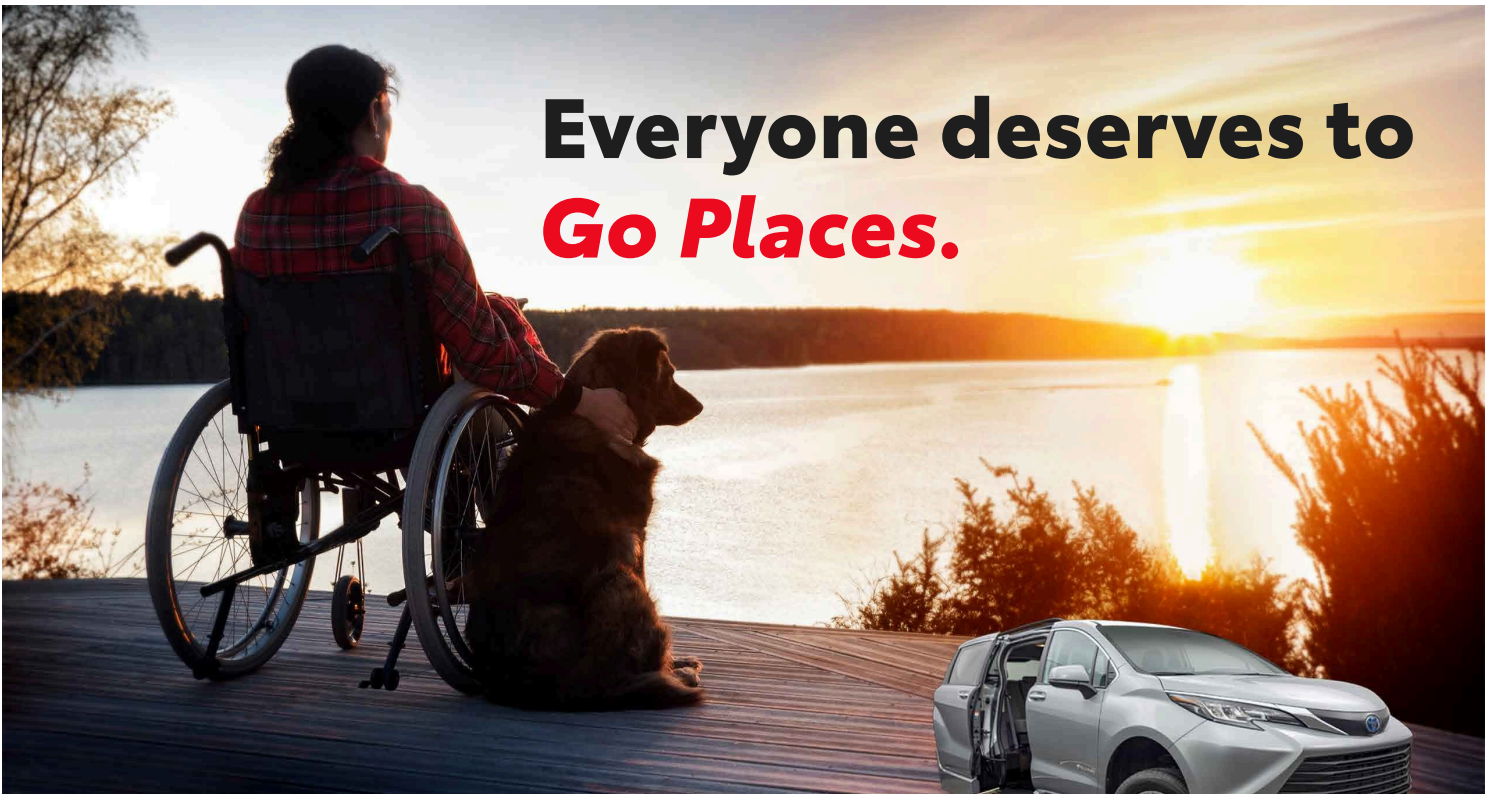
What is the acceptable time period before the program becomes available for use?

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.

Call the office at (216) 731-1017 to find out more



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