



Washington Update

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

PVA MEETING WITH VA SECRETARY DOUG COLLINS

On March 21, CEO Carl Blake and Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley met with VA Secretary Doug Collins. Our discussion focused on the importance of the VA's SCI/D system of care, the accountability offered by PVA's site visits, and the training provided to VA clinicians through PVA's Healthcare Summit. The Secretary is focused on providing services and care for veterans and holding VA employees accountable for their work. We look forward to working closely with Secretary Collins on ensuring that the needs of PVA members and their families, caregivers, and survivors are met.

HOUSE REINTRODUCES HISA LEGISLATION

A priority piece of legislation has been reintroduced in the House by Representative Don Bacon (R-NE), H.R. 2245, the Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act. This legislation would increase the amount for veterans using the Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant. This bill has been in play for several congresses now and PVA is eager to see it be signed into law.

H.R. 2245 would increase the HISA grant amount from \$6,800 to \$10,000 for service-connected veterans and from \$2,000 to \$5,000 for non-service-connected

veterans. The bill would also authorize the HISA grant to be tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), allowing the grant amount to rise as the cost of construction increases.

Unfortunately, the legislation does not authorize additional grant funding retroactively, meaning that if someone previously exhausted the HISA grant before the legislation becomes law, they will not be eligible for additional funding after passage.

PVA FILES MOTION TO INTERVENE IN LEGAL CHALLENGE TO DOT WHEELCHAIR USER RULE

PVA recently filed a motion with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit for leave to intervene in *Airlines for America et al. v. U.S. Department of Transportation*, a legal challenge brought in February by major U.S. airlines against the Department of Transportation's (DOT) final rule titled, "Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs." The rule, published in December 2024, is focused on improving the safety and dignity of air travel for wheelchair users through increased training and notification requirements. In its motion, PVA argues that it and its members have a direct and protectable interest in defending the rule. The motion underscores that no party in the case adequately represents its



unique interest and that the organization must be at the table to defend the regulations.

NOVA LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR

PVA's National Legislative Director Morgan Brown and Senior Health Policy Advisor Roscoe Butler participated in the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) Legislative Seminar which was held on March 21 in Washington D.C. This year's event brought together representatives from more than two dozen like-minded organizations from around the country plus congressional staff to discuss issues like preserving the VA and fixing the department's critical staffing shortages.

The impact of VA's recent dismissal of approximately 2,400 employees and future plans to reduce the department's workforce by another 80,000 later this year was front and center of many of the day's discussions. PVA briefed attendees on key priorities for 2025 which include preserving VA's SCI/D system of care by ensuring its proper funding, addressing current staffing shortfalls, and fixing infrastructure deficiencies that compromise veteran's care.

EO SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS TRANSITION HEARING

On March 25, the Economic Opportunity (EO) Subcommittee for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) held an oversight hearing focused on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). The TAP program is a multi-agency effort to improve transition led by the VA, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Department of Labor (DOL).

During the past few years, there has been increased oversight over TAP, but HVAC has no jurisdiction over the DOD which has led to the department declining invitations to participate in the past. Subcommittee Chairman Derrick Van Orden (R-WI) commended DOD for their attendance at this hearing.

Many members grilled DOD for the lack of accountability over unit commanders who have failed to allow the

servicemembers in their units to attend required TAP courses as they look towards transitioning out of the military. It was highlighted that the military will put tens of thousands of dollars and hours into a member of the military but refuse to put in any efforts to guarantee servicemembers are prepared for the civilian world. DOD highlighted that recently implemented policies around accountability should lead to increased TAP participation.

The first panel was witnesses on behalf of DOD, VA, and DOL, and the second panel was veteran serving organizations that help with transition programs in partnership, or independently, of the formal TAP curriculum. The second panel focused mostly on improving employment outcomes for recently transitioned servicemembers and how early intervention during transition can help increase the economic outcomes for veterans.

You can watch the hearing [here](#).

HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS OVERSIGHT HEARING

On March 25, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health held a hearing titled, "Breaking Down Barriers: Getting Veterans ACCESS to Lifesaving Care." The hearing consisted of five witnesses broken down into two panels. Chairwoman Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA) opened the hearing noting that \$20.9 billion is the amount of funding VA received in 2001 at the onset of the Global War on Terrorism. In that same year, 16 to 18 veterans took their lives each day. She then noted that \$121 billion is the amount of funding VA received in 2024. Unfortunately, the number of veterans who died by suicide hasn't improved. You can hear the rest of Chairwoman Miller-Meeks' remarks and the witnesses' testimony, by clicking [here](#).

DAMA LEGISLATIVE HEARING

On March 26, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) conducted a legislative hearing to consider 13 pending pieces of legislation. PVA submitted

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a statement for the record to present our views on the pending legislation that included a bill to increase VA compensation amounts to address cost-of-living increases, two bills that aim to simplify VA forms, and four survivors bills, amongst others. To read PVA's testimony, click [here](#). To watch the hearing, click [here](#).

NEWS OF NOTE

DOJ Announces Withdrawal of ADA Guidance

On March 19, the Department of Justice (DOJ) [announced](#) the withdrawal of 11 pieces of guidance related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). DOJ took the action in response to a January 20 Presidential Memorandum, "Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis." The withdrawn guidance documents were released to the public between 1999 and 2021. A majority of the guidance was related to the COVID pandemic. However, the documents provided helpful information for how ADA protections should be addressed during other health emergencies, including whether caregivers can be excluded from health care settings. Other guidance withdrawn includes assistance at self-service gas stations.

Illinois Court Proposes Order Requiring Chicago to Make Signalized Intersections Accessible

On March 18, the Northeastern District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division filed a [proposed order](#) in a lawsuit against the city of Chicago related to accessibility. In 2019, Disability Rights Advocates and Proskauer Rose LLP filed a [class action lawsuit](#) against the city. Plaintiffs alleged that the city discriminates against blind residents and visitors by failing to include accessible pedestrian signals (APS) at signalized street intersections. The proposed order requires Chicago to equip at least 71 percent of its signalized intersections with APS accessible to blind, low vision, and deafblind pedestrians. The order also requires the city to establish an advisory committee consisting of blind community members and organizations and an APS compliance program.

SSA Announces Implementation of Stronger Identity Verifications

On March 18, the Social Security Administration (SSA) [announced](#) that it is taking steps to implement stronger identity verification procedures for both benefit claims and direct deposit changes to enhance the security of its services. Initially, on March 31, the SSA will enforce online digital identity proofing and in-person identity proofing. Individuals who are unable to verify their identity online to access their "my Social Security" will have to visit a local office to prove their identity in person. These individuals will also have to start their claim for benefits on the phone but cannot complete the claim until after they verify their identity in person. Identities will have to be verified before starting a transaction. The SSA also plans to implement the Account Verification Service, which provides instant bank verification services. On March 26, SSA issued an update to the plan explaining that they would extend the policy's effective date by two weeks to ensure employees have the training necessary to help customers. Additionally, Medicare, Disability, and SSI applications will now be exempt from in-person identity proofing because opportunities exist to verify a person's identity during the decision process. April 14 is the new enforcement date for identity verification.

WEBINARS, PVACTION FORCE, & COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Storytelling Webinar

Please join us on April 3 at 2:00 PM ET for our Advocacy Storytelling Webinar. We are partnering with the Armed Services Arts Partnership and have the pleasure of having Maureen Elias teach us how to tell our story for advocacy.

This webinar is open to all PVA members! To register, please click [here](#). If you are registered to attend the 2025 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar, you have been automatically registered for this webinar. The only requirements on your end are to complete the homework ([Click Here](#)).

We will be taking volunteers to practice their pitch.

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PVA Needs You – Sign Today!

Over the last couple of years, we have seen VA health care staffing shortages, a lack of investment in infrastructure, and an overall growing trend towards care in the community. In light of our ongoing concerns about changes at the VA, we created an online petition to quantify the need to improve funding and support of the VA's spinal cord injuries and disorders system of care. Nearly 2,700 individuals have already signed the petition. Click [here](#) to sign your name and show your support. We need veterans, caregivers, and supporters to sign!

Please also take a look at our [2025 PVA Policy Priorities](#) and the issues important to our members. If you are interested in more ways to extend your advocacy efforts, click [here](#) to view our current campaigns on bills we support on our advocacy platform, PVAAction Force. We continue to add more campaigns as additional bills are introduced.

Veterans' Committee Activities

Please visit the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Veterans' Affairs Committee webpages for information on previous and upcoming hearings and markups.