Paralyzed Veterans of America

Issue 15 • Volume 34 August 21, 2026

Washington Update

Check out the PVAction Force page to view legislative campaigns and a list of key legislation.

Status of PVA Legislative Initiatives

Five of PVA's key legislative initiatives remain in various states of progress as members of Congress are in their states and districts for the August recess. Here is a quick look at where each of them stands followed by an update on the veteran omnibus package that incorporated these bills, along with many others, into a much larger package.

S. 3647, the Disabled Veterans Dignity Act, would create a permanent VA bowel and bladder care program for veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D). It directs the department to standardize all processes, training, and procedures associated with it. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS) is the bill's lone sponsor and there is currently no House companion bill.

H.R. 6047, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act, would modernize Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) rates for severely disabled veterans and strengthen Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for surviving families. It aims to better reflect today's cost of living, address outdated benefit structures, and provide greater financial stability for veterans and their families. The bill passed the House on May 21 and still awaits Senate action. There is no Senate companion measure.

H.R. 1685/S. 749, the Justice for ALS Veterans Act, would ensure that future surviving spouses of veterans who died of service-connected ALS are eligible for increased survivor benefits. Surviving spouses of ALS veterans are rarely able to qualify for enhanced DIC because of the quick progression of the disease. There is nominal support for this relatively low-cost measure with 33 cosponsors in the House and 13 in the Senate.

H.R. 6835/S. 3988, the Veterans STAND Act, seeks to ensure veterans with SCI/D receive consistent, comprehensive health evaluations and are considered for innovative treatments that could enhance their mobility, independence, and quality of life. Twenty Representatives are cosponsoring the House measure. In the Senate, Chairman Moran is the bill's lone sponsor.

H.R. 1364/S. 1726, the Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation (ASSIST) Act, would clarify the types of automotive adapted equipment that can be provided to disabled veterans as part of the VA's medical benefits package. Under the bill, the VA may provide funding for ramp and kneeling systems, lowered floors, mobility device lifts, non-articulating trailers, and ingress or egress accessibility modifications. The Senate bill has one more sponsor than the House version with nine and eight respectively.

As previously mentioned, each of these five bills were included in a very large omnibus package called the

Take Care of America's Veterans Act (H.R. 9237/S. 4744). Although this bill includes many priorities supported by veterans organizations, the bill's funding provision has caused a split in the community regarding whether it should move forward. PVA has concerns with the funding provision, as do many other veterans service organizations.

On July 16, the House leadership was forced to pull the bill following an extremely close vote on a proposed amendment that would have returned the bill to the committee for more work. The Republican leadership has made it clear, however, that they intend to bring the bill back up in the fall.

On July 28, Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) brought the bill up on the Senate floor and offered an amendment to change its funding provision. Chairman Moran blocked that effort. Chairman Moran then attempted to move the bill forward without the amendment, but that action was blocked by Ranking Member Blumenthal, ending its chances to be passed before the August recess. Like their House counterparts, we anticipate there will be another attempt to pass the bill after Congress returns in the fall. It's unclear, however, what the bill's prospects for passage are given the opposition in Congress and the veterans' community to moving it forward.

DOT Extends Enforcement Discretion for Rules Affecting Wheelchair & Scooter Users in Air Travel

On August 4, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a notice of enforcement discretion stating that DOT is delaying enforcement of certain provisions of the final rules, "Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs" (Wheelchair User Rule) and "Accessible Lavatories on Single-Aisle Aircraft" (Accessible Lavatory Rule). The Wheelchair User Rule, published in December 2024, expanded the rights of passengers who fly with wheelchairs and scooters. According to the notice, DOT will be delaying enforcement of four provisions of the rule. The four provisions include: (1) an airline's liability for mishandled wheelchairs; (2) the frequency of refresher training for airline personnel and contractors; (3) passenger pre-departure notification requirements; and (4) reimbursement of fare differences when the passenger's preferred flights cannot accommodate their wheelchair or scooter. DOT previously issued a notice delaying enforcement until December 31, 2026.

Under the new notice, DOT is extending the temporary compliance pause for the four provisions to April 30, 2027. According to the agency's short-term agenda, DOT will reopen the requirements under these four provisions in an upcoming notice of proposed rulemaking, Wheelchair Rule II.

In addition, DOT is delaying enforcement of the training requirements under the Accessible Lavatory Rule. That rule required airlines to train flight attendants to proficiency on an annual basis to assist individuals to and from the on-board lavatory from their aircraft seat using an on-board wheelchair. This provision of the rule was scheduled to become effective on October 2, 2026. However, DOT will now reconsider the frequency of the refresher training under the Wheelchair Rule II.

PVA Participates in NASDVA Conference

On August 10, Associate Legislative Director Jennifer Hunt represented PVA on a panel during the annual training conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA). The organization represents the leaders of state and territorial veterans' affairs agencies and grew out of the need for states to coordinate delivery of the expanding array of federal and state benefits available to veterans returning from World War II.

Joined by representatives from American Veterans (AMVETS), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the discussion topics covered legislative priorities, thoughts on the future work of Congress and veterans service organizations, and the introduction of the Take Care of America's Veterans Act (H.R. 9237/S. 4744).

New Study Shows ALS Risk Varies by Branch

A new study suggests that a veteran's risk for developing ALS varies depending on what branch of service and rank the veteran held. The study found that the risk of ALS was lower among people who served in the United States Marine Corps or Army than among those who served in the Coast Guard, Navy, or Air Force.

The same study suggested that commissioned officers also have a higher risk of developing the disease than enlisted personnel. Statistically, they found that officers were significantly more likely than enlisted personnel to develop ALS, with the risk being 64 percent higher among men and 72 percent higher among women. The researchers analyzed data from nearly 10 million veterans — mostly men — who had one documented encounter with the Veterans Health Administration from 2000 to 2024. Results showed that men in the Marines had the lowest risk of ALS among military personnel. Compared with men who served in the Army, Marines had a 22 percent lower risk of developing ALS.

To read the study, click here.

Congress Moves ACT for ALS Reauthorization Act

Prior to the August recess, the House and Senate passed differing versions of a law that would reauthorize the Accelerating Access to Critical Therapies for ALS Act (P.L. 117-79), which was signed into law on December 23, 2021. The original law provided $100 million annually from 2022 through 2026 to support ALS research, accelerate drug development, and help individuals who are not eligible for clinical trials access investigational treatments through expanded access programs. The ACT for ALS Reauthorization Act (H.R. 8205/S. 4472) would extend and enhance the program for an additional five years, codify FDA guidance on expanded access, and require updated action plans and reporting requirements. When lawmakers return in the fall, the two chambers will need to come together to resolve their minor differences and come up with a single bill both chambers can approve before the measure can be presented to the president for his signature.

NPS Publishes Final Rule Establishing Framework on Powered Micromobility Devices

On August 11, the National Park Service (NPS) published a final rule that established a framework for managing powered micromobility devices in the National Park System. This final rule follows a proposed rule published by NPS in January 2025 soliciting comments about the devices. PVA assisted in drafting the public comment in conjunction with the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities. In the comment, we discussed the importance of regulating powered micromobility devices to ensure they do not compromise the integrity of trails, public sidewalks, curb ramps, crosswalks, and transit stops. We also encouraged NPS to include an exclusion for adaptive devices for people with disabilities in the general prohibition of the devices.

The final rule defines powered micromobility devices, provides guidelines for visitors and park managers, and provides flexibility to superintendents who believe the devices can be used by visitors and managed by NPS in certain locations. Powered micromobility devices are now defined as human operated, self-propelled devices with a curb weight of less than 150 pounds and without an internal combustion engine. For example, e-scooters, hoverboards, and Segways would fall under this new definition. Motorized wheelchairs are explicitly excluded.

The rule prohibits use of powered micromobility devices in parks except for designated locations and requires rulemaking to occur before the devices are allowed in locations that have never been altered by artificial materials. This would mean that adaptive devices that fall under the powered micromobility device definition are generally prohibited. The final rule does note that the rule does not have any effect on the applicability of federal law governing the use of mobility aids and devices by people with disabilities.

OIG Audit of the VA Education Service's Compliance Surveys

The VA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recently performed an audit of the management of compliance

surveys to determine if the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) appropriately conducted necessary oversight of education and training institutions that receive GI Bill funding.

In the VBA Annual Benefits Report, the VA reported that more than $13 billion in education benefits were issued by over 933,000 veterans and beneficiaries in fiscal year 2025. To receive education benefits payments as an institution, programs must comply with all requirements under the law. To ensure compliance, a school may be subjected to a compliance survey if an institution has 20 or more education beneficiaries.

The OIG found that out of more than 7,000 schools, nearly 650 of them (approximately 8 percent) were not scheduled for a compliance survey despite needing them. OIG noted that VBA's management of compliance surveys did not ensure oversight of institutions and because of that made several recommendations. Of the six recommendations that were made, VA agreed with all of them and has begun improved reporting plans and oversight to prevent this type of mistake in the future.

You can read the report here.

OIG Reviews VHA Maternity Care Coordination and Women Veterans' Experience

In early August, the VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a report encompassing a review of maternity care coordination offered across the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). In fiscal year 2025, approximately 10,700 women veterans used VHA maternity care coordination services.

Between August 2024 and April 2026, the OIG found that 88 percent of pregnant women had contact attempts marked within their health record by a maternity care coordinator with 73 percent being successfully contacted. However, during the postpartum stages after pregnancy, only 51 percent of patients had contact attempts by VA staff, and only 24 percent were successfully contacted. The OIG also discovered that required screenings for depression, relationship safety, housing, food security, and substance use were not offered for patients.

Most maternity care is offered through community care providers which adds challenges to updating a veteran's VA electronic health record. Noted in the OIG report was that the average time from consult to initial appointment for a high-risk provider was 24 days with 74 percent being seen within 30 days. Another glaring deficiency within the OIG report is that 25 percent of the maternity care coordinators surveyed reported complications with billing. However, nearly 40 percent of veterans reported experiencing billing problems.

The OIG made four recommendations that included VHA compliance with existing action plans, coordinator compliance with requirements for postpartum screenings and implementation of action plans, evaluation of billing concerns and resolution, and improvements to primary care appointments for postpartum appointments.

You can read the OIG report here.

News of Note

Fifth Circuit Appeals Court Revives Texas Voter Suppression Law

On August 12, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit reversed a lower court decision that found Texas Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) violated the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act by imposing significant barriers for people with disabilities. Among other things, SB 1 criminalized voter assistance by some family members, caregivers, and others for voters with disabilities, created burdensome ID requirements for mail-in ballots, and prevented election officials from taking proactive steps to ensure accessibility. The Fifth Circuit ruling puts these barriers back in place prior to the November 2026 midterm elections. To vote by mail, a voter must now provide an identification or Social Security number that matches the number in the state's voter registration records. People assisting voters must also take an oath if they are even allowed to assist based on the restrictions imposed

by SB1. Disability advocacy organizations plan to continue pursuing legal avenues to protect equal voting access for people with disabilities in Texas. In preparation for the midterm elections, ensure that you are registered to vote and create a voting plan ahead of time. Visit PVA's accessible voting page for assistance on making a voting plan.

Two Bills Introduced to Support Accessible Housing for Seniors and People with Disabilities

In early August, the Senior Accessible Housing Tax Credit Act (S. 5216/H.R. 9554) and the Visitable Inclusive Tax Credits for Accessible Living (VITAL) Act (S. 5285/H.R. 10049) were introduced in the Senate. The Senior Accessible Housing Tax Credit Act would create a non-refundable tax credit for taxpayers aged 60 or older for expenses related to certain home modifications on their principal residence or a qualifying second home. The credit would be equal to the cost of eligible expenditures, such as wheelchair ramps, handrails, chair lifts, shower seats, and more, with an annual credit limit of $10,000. Eligible expenditures would also include certain labor costs related to the preparation, assembly, or installation of an eligible modification.

The VITAL Act would add incentives for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC), a federal program providing tax credits to developers who build new housing for lower-income renters, to increase the number of accessible homes so that more people with disabilities and older adults can live in the communities of their choice. It would also require that states administering LIHTC ensure that at least 20 percent of their LIHTC units are accessible and/or walkable and rollable. PVA will monitor both bills.

HUD Proposes Further Elimination of Agency's Disparate Impact Regulations

On August 10, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published a supplemental proposed rule to eliminate the agency's disparate impact regulations that implement Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin by recipients of federal financial assistance, including federally assisted housing. HUD's Title VI regulation, which applies to financial recipients of HUD's programs and activities, including housing assistance programs, previously included provisions that interpreted Title VI to prohibit conduct that has a discriminatory purpose (intentional discrimination) and has a discriminatory effect (disparate impact). This supplemental proposed rule reopens HUD's January 2026 proposed rule where the agency proposed eliminating its 2013 Fair Housing Act disparate impact regulations. The supplemental proposed rule is subject to a 60-day comment period that closes on October 9, 2026. PVA will monitor the situation and continue to give updates on the matter.

Events, Surveys and Committee Activities

NEW: Register Today for Access to the Skies

PVA and All Wheels Up are working together to reshape the future of accessible air travel – and you're invited. Join us virtually, or in person if you're in the Colorado Springs, CO area, on October 1 from 10:00 AM –2:00 PM MT. Attendees will hear from airline, airport, disability, government, and other stakeholders about improving air travel for people with disabilities both today and in the future. To register, click here. It's free!

REMINDER: Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles Survey

Tesla has released a survey to learn more from individuals who use wheelchair accessible vehicles. The survey seeks to learn from the experiences and perspectives of mobility device users of what works, what does not, and what the future should look like. The survey covers your experiences with wheelchair accessible vehicles; the features and design elements that matter most; and your visions for how the vehicles should evolve. The survey can be accessed online.

Veterans' Committee Activities

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