Paralyzed Veterans of America

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Washington Update

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

Congress Approves Temporary Funding Measure

Unlike recent years, lawmakers did not wait until the last minute to approve legislation keeping the government running beyond September 30. On September 1, the House passed the Senate's Continuing Resolution (CR). The President signed it into law the following day. For the most part, H.R. 6500, the Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2027, extends the current year's funding levels through December 11 or until applicable appropriations acts are passed to fund the government through fiscal year 2027 – whichever comes first.

A separate provision in the CR delays the implementation of an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Rule overhauling Uniform Guidance, which governs how federal grants can be administered, until December 11. The rule could fundamentally change how federal research grants are managed, making studies on conditions, like SCI/D, much harder for researchers to conduct. PVA has registered concerns with OMB's proposal.

Another provision in the CR extended the 2021 Surface Transportation Reauthorization until December 11. The most recent authorization was set to expire on September 30. The surface bill authorizes funding, sets policy, and creates programs that address roads, bridges, transit, and other transportation projects. PVA has worked on ensuring that the next reauthorization includes provisions that improve transportation options for people with disabilities.

Senate Holds Congressional Roundtable on VDC Program

In early September, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a roundtable focused on VA's Veteran Directed Care (VDC) program. VDC is an important home and community-based services program that gives eligible veterans greater control over how their long-term care needs are met.

The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (Public Law 118–210) established VDC in statute and directed the department to make it available through every VA medical center within two years of enactment. It also reinforced veterans' ability to direct their own services, authorized VA to work with community organizations, such as Area Agencies on Aging and Centers for Independent Living, and required the department to address staffing and administrative needs for the program.

Conversation at the Senate roundtable focused on VDC availability, consistency in its management across VA facilities, staffing and funding challenges, oversight, and

implementation of provisions in the Elizabeth Dole Act. Participants included representatives from VA; the Administration for Community Living; advocates; and veterans organizations, including PVA.

According to VA, there are about 15,000 veterans in the program now and only two sites that don't offer it. They are working to bring the program online at those locations soon. Also, they've cut the number of underperforming sites (less than 10 participants) in half. There are now about 22 sites that are still not performing as expected.

PVA and the other veterans organizations noted significant variation with the program across VA medical centers. Differences in staffing, facility capacity, funding, and local leadership have contributed to uneven enrollment and eligibility determinations. Also, some locations reportedly have waitlists, while others struggle to offer the program consistently. Many veterans eligible for the program are being denied access to it verbally or through means other than in writing. The absence of a written denial makes it difficult for service officers to file an appeal on their behalf.

The VA representatives acknowledged inconsistencies across facilities and pledged to conduct a system-wide review to identify and address access and implementation issues. They felt some of the problems could be resolved by VA's ongoing reorganization. They also stated denials should be provided in writing and indicated they are currently reviewing eligibility tools and processes, including coordination with other support programs.

Roundtables like these are integral to ensuring veterans can access the care that best suits them. If you or someone you know was denied participation in VDC or another one of VA's home and community-based services, be sure to let your service officer know.

President Signs EO Aimed at Improving Veteran Benefits and Employment Opportunities

On September 8, the President signed an Executive Order (EO) directed at improving the benefits process and employment outcomes of transitioning service members. Section two of the EO, "Requiring Prompt Sharing of Military Personnel and Medical Records," directs that within 180 days the VA and the Department of Defense (DOD) establish updated information technology systems and policy guidance and memoranda to improve the sharing of records between the two departments.

The EO also states that a new digital tool should be developed to streamline a veteran's application for access to benefits and create a comprehensive single source that includes job training and opportunities offered by the Department of Labor (DOL).

Section three, "Accelerating Veterans' Access to Quality Employment," directs the appropriate secretaries of DOL, DOD, and the VA to ensure each service member leaving active duty, to the extent practicable, is connected to job fields related to their skills and interests; enrolled in career or technical education, such as an apprenticeship or training program; or be connected with a veteran representative to facilitate applications for healthcare, disability benefits, and other services offered by the VA and DOL. The EO does not authorize additional funds or appropriations to make these things happen.

DOD, VA, and DOL currently work together to offer transition support for all service members and veterans. However, continued gaps in those services are a longstanding concern.

You can read the EO here.

HUD Memo Changes Statute of Limitations for FHA Construction Violations

On August 31, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity issued an internal memorandum containing new guidance on the Fair Housing Act's (FHA) statute of limitations for claims alleging violations of design and construction requirements. The new guidance essentially shortens the time people are allowed to bring such claims. The memo rescinds

portions of 2013 guidance issued by HUD and the Department of Justice that interpreted the one-year statute of limitations for administrative claims to begin when an aggrieved person is injured as a result of a failure to design and construct housing in compliance with FHA accessibility requirements.

Under the new guidance, HUD considers the one-year statute of limitations to begin upon completion of construction, as evidenced by the issuance of a certificate of occupancy. The memo clarifies that the continued existence of an inaccessible feature does not restart or extend the limitations period. HUD views the failure to design and construct a covered multifamily dwelling in compliance with the FHA as a discrete, rather than continuing, violation.

This new guidance greatly limits the ability of people with disabilities to obtain administrative relief from HUD for FHA access claims that are related to design and construction violations. If violations are not reported within a year after the issuance of a certificate of occupancy, it is too late. HUD stated that this change applied immediately on August 31, 2026. This memo is not new law. Instead, it informs HUD staff about how to handle FHA complaints.

AMTRAK Launches Website on Stations' ADA Compliance

Amtrak recently launched a website featuring an interactive map and dashboard that tracks station upgrades in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA Stations Program is a multi-year program developed to bring stations, or the components of the stations that Amtrak has responsibility for, into compliance with the ADA. Many stations have different owners. Amtrak is only responsible for bringing stations into compliance where it is a full or partial owner. Depending on ownership, Amtrak may be responsible for the structure of the station, the train platform, and/or parking.

Amtrak is responsible for 382 stations, but 15 stations are being brought into compliance by a third party. As of September 8, 2026, 163 of the stations meet full compliance, 35 stations are expected to be completed in fiscal year 2026, and 100 percent compliance is expected by 2029. Amtrak is investing $1.8 billion in projects. The website indicates which projects are completed; in design; in construction; the construction is completed and awaiting final verification; or that Amtrak is not responsible for that station. Visitors to the website can click or search a station to see the station-specific status.

News of Note

DOT Releases New AV National Strategy

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) recently published an updated strategy regarding the deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs). The "America Leads: DOT's National Strategy for Automated Vehicles (AV 5.0)" discusses the necessary federal requirements that need to be promulgated before driverless cars and robotaxis can be deployed nationwide. The strategy directs multiple government entities to act on these necessary regulatory actions. The main themes discussed are prioritizing safety; providing regulatory certainty; promoting American innovation; and facilitating interoperable corridors. The strategy highlights that AVs must demonstrate safe operation before commercial deployment. The document is not binding but intends to provide a framework moving forward for fiscal years 2026-2030.

Letter Sent to VA Secretary Demanding Answers to Reasonable Accommodations Denied for VA Employees

On September 9, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee announced that Ranking Member Mark Takano (D-CA) and his fellow minority colleagues had sent a letter to the VA Secretary expressing concerns about the denial of reasonable accommodations for disabled VA employees, many of whom are veterans. The letter raised concerns about whether VA is consistently applying the individualized and effective-accommodation standards required by Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, VA policy, and applicable collective bargaining agreements. Additionally, the

committee sited several grievances filed against VA by labor unions.

You can read the letter here or the press release here.

Events, Surveys and Committee Activities

NEW: MSKTC Seeks Survey Participants

The Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (MSKTC) seeks participants for a brief survey on the need for information on spinal cord injury (SCI), traumatic brain injury (TBI), or burn injuries.

Participants must be over the age of 18 and may be a person with a TBI, SCI, or burn injury, or a caregiver, clinician, or state or federal program administrator. The information gathered will help MSKTC develop future publications and products for individuals, caregivers, and practitioners.

To learn more, click here.

REMINDER: 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!

Veterans' Committee Activities

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