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.

ACT for ALS Act Reauthorized

On September 28, lawmakers passed the ACT for ALS Reauthorization Act, extending the ACT for ALS Act originally passed in 2021. The original ACT for ALS was designed to address the urgent need for access to promising investigational therapies for people with ALS. The principal goals of the original Act were to accelerate access to investigational therapies for people with ALS and to advance research on treatments for this 100 percent fatal disease. The original Act was set to expire at the end of this month. The Reauthorization Act extends the original bill's critical research and expands access programs through 2031. The next stop for the bill is the White House where the President is expected to sign it into law.

VA OIG Report Documents Severe VHA Occupational Staffing Shortages

On September 11, the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a report detailing staffing shortages in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). In fiscal year 2026, VHA reported a total of 4,712 severe occupational staffing shortages. The report reveals severe shortages in 389 occupations. That includes providers serving in key medical specialties like neurology, gastroenterology, physiatry and urology. A shortage of practical nurses, the most frequently reported clinical shortage, was cited by 59 percent of the facilities and includes some with additional expertise in wound or spinal cord injuries and disorders care. Shortages in key support positions, like respiratory therapists and social workers, were also noted. Police officers were reported as a shortage by VHA officials for 57 percent of facilities, making it the most frequently reported nonclinical shortage occupation. The report, which lists vacancies by facility, does not make recommendations.

The 4,712 severe occupational staffing shortages noted in this year's report are a record number, suggesting the department's staffing issues are growing. Bear in mind, it takes time to compile the data and write the report, so some vacancies may have been filled. However, it can be used by Congress and VA to keep an eye on critical staffing concerns.

HVAC Holds Roundtable on the Veteran Foreclosure Crisis

In recent years, an increasing number of VA-backed home loans are facing foreclosure. On September 23, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) Minority held a roundtable to discuss this issue, as well as possible solutions that could mitigate the risk of foreclosure.

The invitees were all representatives from the home loan industry and included the Center for Responsible Lending, Housing Policy Council, the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC), the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals, and the National Association of Mortgage Brokers. These policy experts engaged in a thorough discussion with Democratic members of the committee and drove home the need for better protections for veteran borrowers.

A prominent discussion topic focused on the VA and where they are with the implementation of the long-awaited Partial Claims Program (PCP) that was passed into law last year after the sunsetting of the Veterans Affairs Servicing Purchase (VASP) Program early in 2025. The industry representatives noted that while the VA has announced the roll out of the PCP that servicers are not expected to be able to administer to program until November of this year.

You can watch the roundtable here.

Congressional Briefing Held on Accelerating Breakthrough SCI Innovation

On September 17, BreakThru SCI, a grassroots advocacy organization, hosted a congressional briefing for members of Congress, staffers, and the broader community to raise awareness and to help accelerate the approval of promising treatments for spinal cord injuries (SCI). The briefing, held during SCI Awareness Month, explored the misunderstood biological complexity of SCI, the emerging pipeline of novel restorative therapies, the firsthand perspectives of SCI clinical-trial patients, and the designated regulatory pathways for high unmet need areas. One of the speakers, Janet Woodcock, M.D., former Acting Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), stated, “This kind of constructive engagement with policymakers and regulators is essential to advancing patient-focused drug development for conditions with significant unmet need.”

RAND Publishes New Study on the Evolution of Veteran Labor Market Outcomes

RAND recently published a report that examined how military service connects to earnings in the civilian labor market. The report tracks veterans’ and non-veterans’ labor market outcomes over their first eight years after entering the civilian workforce.

Using data from the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program, the largest longitudinal panel of U.S. worker employment, as well as the American Community Survey, RAND studied earnings from 2005 to 2019. The data was used to compare veterans and non-veterans over time, while accounting for observable differences.

The sample included approximately 13,000 post-9/11 veterans, 661,000 non-veterans, and covered around 30 states that agreed to participate in the study. The report focused on workers between the ages of 23 and 35.

The research showed that veterans’ earnings grew around 10 percent more than those of comparable non-veterans. While veterans tended to begin civilian careers with slightly lower initial earnings, their earnings rose more rapidly than non-veterans’, and this remained true across demographic groups.

The report urges additional research to be conducted, especially related to military service histories tied to civilian employment, to include federal employment, to comprehensively understand the veteran transition upon separation.

You can read the report here.

New Report Highlights the Needs of “Sandwich Generation” Caregivers

The National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP recently released a report focused on “sandwich generation” caregivers, which are a group of adults who are caring for their aging parents and their children who are under age 18. Nearly half of these caregivers are ages 35 to 49,

and nearly 70 percent are employed while providing care.

Understandably, the pressures of working and caregiving can take a toll on their health. Specifically, 22 percent of sandwich generation caregivers report physical strain, compared with 17 percent of other caregivers, while almost 40 percent report high emotional stress. More than a quarter say caregiving makes it difficult to care for their own health.

Also, just over one in five sandwich generation caregivers (22 percent) experience high financial strain due to caregiving, which is significantly more than all other caregivers (16 percent). Sandwich generation caregivers are at a 60 percent higher risk of high financial strain compared to non-sandwich generation caregivers. The higher financial strain results from out-of-pocket care costs for their aging parents, coupled with out-of-pocket costs for their children, e.g., childcare.

The report concludes with recommendations about ways governments can support sandwich generation caregivers. Recommendations include paid leave policies, tax credits, and grants. Like similar studies, its findings point to the urgent need for a coordinated, national effort to support the growing needs of all caregivers.

NEWS OF NOTE

SVAC Holds Nominations Hearing

On September 23, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) conducted a hearing to consider the nominations of Maria C. Lopez to be Chair of the Board of Veterans' Appeals and Robert R. Fleck, David M. Jones, Daniel F. Rendleman, and James L. Quinn to be judges on the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. One of the major concerns expressed by the committee members is the increasing number of appeals, while financial resources for the Board continue to be cut. All the nominees shared their desire to find ways to decrease the number of cases, while judging judiciously and without bias.

You can watch the hearing here.

Foundations Announce First-of-Its-Kind Credit Union for People with Disabilities

The Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation recently announced joint funding to launch a credit union focused on serving people with disabilities. The Artichoke Credit Union will be created in partnership with Michigan State University Federal Credit Union and is designed to center the needs, voices, and experiences of the disability community with the goal of increasing financial inclusion for people with disabilities.

You can read the press release here.

SURVEYS AND COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

REMINDER: 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.

Veterans' Committee Activities

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