Paralyzed Veterans of America

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Washington Update

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

TAKE ACTION: Ask your Representative to Support the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act (H.R. 6047)

SVAC Reviews VA's Plans to Restructure the Veterans Health Administration

On January 28, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a full committee hearing titled, "Building a 21st Century VA Health Care System: Assessing Efforts to Restructure the Veterans Health Administration [VHA]," to evaluate VA's plan to drastically change how the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) are aligned and staffed. VA Secretary Doug Collins was joined by Under Secretary for Health John Bartrum; Assistant Secretary for HR & Administration Mark Engelbaum; and Acting Chief Operating Officer, VHA, Gregory Goins to answer the Senators' questions.

Referred to as the Restructure for Impact and Sustainability Effort (RISE) this reorganization is aimed at realigning resources and staffing to better differentiate between administrative oversight and operational support of medical centers. The number of VISNs is being reduced from 18 to 5, while staff and resources will be increased in areas experiencing veteran population growth. Areas with declining demand will be consolidated and staffing will be right sized through attrition. Secretary Collins emphasized that this is a modernizing effort to meet veterans' health care needs and provide higher quality care with increased access. You can watch the hearing here.

Currently, the effect of restructuring the VHA on the SCI/D system of care remains unclear. In a statement released after the Secretary's announcement in December, PVA CEO Carl Blake noted PVA's concern for administrative bloat that has hindered health care decision-making and made it difficult for VHA to hire the staff needed to deliver health care services more effectively. He offered our support for steps that will eliminate, or at least significantly reduce, unnecessary barriers. We will continue to closely monitor this effort.

PVA Testifies on Pending Legislation at House Hearing

On January 21, PVA testified at a House Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity hearing to examine 10 veterans-related pieces of legislation. Most of the bills addressed transition, housing, or homeless veterans programs. PVA Associate Legislative Director Julie Howell testified at the hearing.

In her oral statement, Ms. Howell focused on three bills that would have the greatest impact on our members.

The first was H.R. 7083, the Cruise Act, which aims to improve the process for reimbursement payments for VA's Automobile Adaptive Equipment program. This legislation would centralize payments to ensure that dealerships that complete the necessary vehicle adaptations are paid in a timely manner. Industry professionals testifying at the hearing told lawmakers that currently there are more than $10 million in outstanding reimbursements owed from the VA to businesses.

The second bill Ms. Howell addressed was H.R. 982, the Warriors to Workforce Act, which would increase the amount of housing payments made to veterans using their Post-9/11 GI Bill for apprenticeship programs. The Military Housing Allowance (MHA) offered to student veterans pursuing an apprenticeship is tiered: the first six months receives 100 percent of the MHA rate, the second six-months is paid at 80 percent, the third-six months is paid at 60 percent, and the last six months is paid at 40 percent. The Warriors to Workforce Act would authorize the second six-month window to be paid at 90 percent instead of 80 percent. PVA and others pointed out that this would create a financial hardship during the third six-month window where a veteran would go from receiving 90 percent of the MHA rate to 60 percent. Ms. Howell suggested amending the language of the bill to authorize the full MHA rate for any veteran deciding to use apprenticeship programs and other on the job training opportunities for the full two years of a program.

The third bill Ms. Howell discussed was H.R. 2878, the Daniel J. Harvey, Jr. and Adam Labert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act. This legislation would authorize the VA to share more information around mental health services and suicide prevention programs through the VA Solid Start program. The VA is required to conduct outreach to newly transitioned veterans to improve their access to VA health care and benefits. PVA supports providing additional information around suicide prevention to new veterans. You can watch the hearing and read PVA's statement here.

HVAC Assesses VA's Community Care Network

On January 22, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) held a full committee hearing titled, "Community Care Network Next Generation: One Trillion Dollars of Oversight." Richard Topping, VA's Chief Financial Officer, described this contract as being more flexible and responsive to veterans' changing health care needs than previous contracts. He also highlighted updates to language governing quality of delivery and contract oversight, which VA says will improve their ability to identify and remediate poor performance.

This contract is currently open to proposals, which restricted VA's ability to provide more specifics during the hearing. Therefore, questions from committee members focused generally on the amount of taxpayer dollars being committed to the contract, transparency of VA on the performance of the contract, and concerns that high referrals of care into the community would undercut core Veterans Health Administration capabilities and result in inferior care to veterans. You can watch the hearing here.

Research Funding Update

Much of the federal government has been operating on a continuing resolution (CR) that expires on January 30. Last week, the House passed a six-bill omnibus package to fund these agencies through September 30. The package, which is being considered on the Senate floor now, includes funding for the Department of Defense. While much of this portion of the bill doesn't personally affect PVA members, one area ensures critical research funding.

The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) was originally established in 1993 to eliminate breast cancer. Over the years, other research areas have been added to the program, including those looking at spinal cord injuries and related diseases, like ALS and MS. Early last year, funding for these three areas was stripped from the budget, and after a public outcry ensued, only the funding for ALS was restored. The budget measure the Senate is considering now will provide $40 million for ALS research, $15 million for MS

research and $33 million for spinal cord research conducted through the CDMRP. Research is crucial for conditions like these, because it develops the necessary knowledge that leads to effective treatments and therapies.

Due to concerns over funding for the Department of Homeland Security, it is uncertain whether Congress will finalize action prior to the expiration of the current CR. This would lead to a partial government shutdown. The VA is fully funded through the end of the fiscal year and would not be affected by a shutdown.

More States Introduce Laws to Issue Disability Parking Placards and Permits to Expectant Mothers

More states are passing and considering laws that issue temporary disability parking placards and permits to expectant mothers. These permits allow expectant mothers to park in accessible parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities. For example, Florida passed a law that offers temporary disability parking permits to expectant mothers at any point during the pregnancy. The permit is valid for up to one year. However, on October 27, 2025, a federal lawsuit was filed alleging that the law infringes on the rights of people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The state filed a motion to dismiss which was recently granted.

Florida is not the only state that provides expectant mothers disability parking placards. In Illinois, an expectant mother in her third trimester can obtain a parking placard that is valid for 90 days. Ohio is still considering a bill that would allow expectant mothers to receive a removable windshield placard so they may park in the disability parking spaces. The permit would be valid for one year. The bill is currently pending before a state House committee.

More recently, similar legislation was introduced in New Jersey and New York. The New Jersey bill would permit expectant mothers in their third trimester of pregnancy to receive a temporary disability parking placard. The placard is valid for three months. The bill is pending before a state Senate committee. The New York bill would grant a parking permit to expectant mothers at any stage of their pregnancy. However, the permit would terminate at the end of the pregnancy. The bill is pending before a state Senate committee.

News of Note

HHS Publishes NPRM to Consider Rescinding Section 504 Final Rule

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to consider rescinding portions, or all, of a final rule promulgated in 2024 that included protections for people with disabilities in HHS programs and services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by federally assisted and federally conducted programs and activities. For decades, Section 504 only provided general protections for people with disabilities. In 2024, HHS promulgated a final rule outlining specific requirements to ensure Section 504 compliance. This included requirements for covered entities to have accessible medical diagnostic equipment for wheelchair users, such as accessible exam tables and chairs. However, in September 2024, seventeen states filed a lawsuit against HHS to amend language in the preamble of the 2024 final rule related to gender dysphoria. In response, HHS issued the NPRM, proposing to remove the language in the preamble. However, HHS is also considering rescinding the entire 2024 final rule. PVA submitted a comment in response to the NPRM arguing that HHS should not repeal the entire final rule. The comment cited the importance of the requirements for accessible medical diagnostic equipment and making programs and services accessible for mobility device users.

HVAC Minority Examines Ways to Prevent Scams Against Servicemembers, Veterans, and Their Families

On January 21, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) Minority hosted a roundtable discussion titled, "Frontline of Fraud: Preventing Scams Against Servicemembers, Veterans, and Their Families." During the event, participants discussed fraud schemes that

target veterans and their families, such as predatory lending and fraudulent benefit schemes like those carried out by illegal claims mills. Also covered were pension poaching, disability claims sharks, romance scams, multi-level marketing tactics, and other practices identified by the VA, Federal Trade Commission, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Joining PVA in the discussion were VFW, DAV, the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, National Military Families Association, Veteran Education Success, Vet Voice Foundation, and Alliance to Counter Crime Online. To watch the roundtable, click here.

Webinars, Surveys, and Committee Activities

Webinar: Driving Change in 2026: Inside PVA's Annual Testimony

Join us on February 19 at 2:00 p.m. ET as we prepare for PVA's annual testimony before a joint session of the Veterans Affairs' Committees to learn about our 2026 PVA Policy Priorities. Start off with a warm welcome from PVA National President Robert Thomas, followed by a breakdown of the priorities important to our members. Find out ways you can get involved and help push our priorities forward.

To register, please click here.

Webinar: Accessibility of Federal Facilities—An Overview of the ABA

Join us on March 19 at 2:00 p.m. ET as we explore accessibility under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). Travis Saner, Accessibility Specialist, U.S. Access Board will discuss the essentials of federal facility accessibility under the ABA, from entrances and signage to restrooms and assembly areas.

To register, please click here.

REMINDER: Survey for Project Focused on Improving the Airport Journey of Wheelchair Users

InterVISTAS is currently collaborating with Indiana University – Bloomington (IUB) to collect information on the air travel experiences of people with disabilities. Funded by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, this project strives to identify ways to enhance the air travel experiences of individuals using wheelchairs. PVA is a member of the panel overseeing this project.

How to Participate:

1. Register: Please first complete the screening survey. This will only take 5 minutes.
2. Survey: Once registered, eligible participants (those aged 18 or older, living with a disability that requires the use of a wheelchair, and currently residing in the U.S.) will receive a link to the full online survey.

Please contact the research team with questions at travelX@iu.edu or 812-855-9037. The survey will close once researchers have reached the target number of completed responses.

Stories Requested: Competitive Bidding and Why It Matters to Disabled Veterans

Medicare has recently moved forward with including urology, ostomy, and tracheostomy supplies in its competitive bidding program for the first time in more than 20 years. While disabled veterans typically receive these supplies through the VA—not Medicare, this policy could have significant downstream consequences for veterans who rely on specialized, high-quality medical supplies every day because it reshapes the entire medical supply marketplace.

As product choice narrows across the broader health care system, fewer options remain available to all payers, including the VA. Over time, this can reduce access to the specific brands, features, and configurations that veterans rely on to prevent infections, protect skin integrity, maintain kidney health, and preserve independence. Advocates are urgently collecting personal stories from disabled veterans to help policymakers understand these real-world impacts.

If you are interested in providing an interview, please contact Ali Ingersoll, Ms. Wheelchair America 2023 and Disability Advocate, at 919-395-1491 or

Ali.Ingersoll@gmail.com. Participants will receive $100-$200 for a brief interview and Ali will write up the patient story, op-Ed, and work with those interested in further advocacy exposure on this critical topic.

Veterans' Committee Activities

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