



# Washington Update

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

## PVA TESTIFIES BEFORE THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON THE EXPLORE ACT

On April 22, PVA Associate Legislative Director Julie Howell testified before the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Federal Lands to discuss progress made on the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act (P.L. 118-243).

The EXPLORE Act, passed last Congress with broad bipartisan support, seeks to modernize and expand outdoor recreation opportunities on federal lands. Title II of the EXPLORE Act focuses on accessibility improvements across national parks and federal lands. It also contains a section titled, “Military and Veterans in Parks,” which seeks to increase awareness and use of federal lands by servicemembers, veterans, and gold star families.

PVA’s testimony focused on the importance of sports and recreation opportunities for disabled veterans and the programs we offer for our members. Our testimony also discussed the need for the relevant federal agencies to have sufficient staffing and resources to implement the bill. We further discussed the need for interagency cooperation and engagement with veterans service organizations and other organizations that are already doing this work.

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

## PVA SUBMITS COMMENTS ADDRESSING UNIVERSAL CHANGING TABLES

On April 17, PVA submitted [comments](#) in response to an [advanced notice of proposed rulemaking](#) (ANPRM) published by the U.S. Access Board on universal changing tables. The ANPRM is intended to begin the process of establishing accessible design standards for universal changing tables and on the privacy, accessibility, and sanitation equipment of the room. These standards will be used by medium and large hub airports seeking airport development project grants.

A universal changing table (also known as an “adult changing table”) is a table on which an individual with a disability receives assistance from a caregiver with toileting. The changing tables are intended to be used by individuals with a wide range of disabilities and medical conditions. Although there are accessibility standards for other aspects of restrooms, there are currently no standards for universal changing tables. The Access Board sought comments to inform future rulemaking on these standards.

PVA is part of a working group developing industry standards for universal changing tables. However, these standards are not enforceable unless adopted by the Access Board. PVA recommended the Access Board adopt the standards developed by the working group. In addition, PVA urged the Access Board to consider the



accommodations needed for people with a wide range of mobility disabilities. PVA's comments also addressed additional technical specifications that could increase the privacy, accessibility, and sanitation of the equipment and rooms.

### HOUSE VA COMMITTEE DISCUSSES CLAIMS BACKLOG

On April 15, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee conducted an oversight hearing to discuss the landmark progress VA has made in reducing the disability compensation benefits backlog. Since the start of this administration, the backlog has dropped by more than 57 percent, decreasing by over 150,000 claims. The hearing also discussed how VA is using recent policy changes provided by Congress to modernize the Veterans Benefits Administration's processes and get VA benefits decisions to veterans faster. To view the hearing, click [here](#).

### PVA SUBMITS COMMENTS ON RURAL TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

On April 24, PVA submitted comments in response to a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) request for [comments](#) on its Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Initiative that addresses transportation needs of rural and Tribal communities. Established in October 2019, ROUTES engages with rural and Tribal communities through outreach, technical assistance, and resource and policy development. DOT requested comments to inform rural transportation policy and the development of future ROUTES activities.

PVA submitted [comments](#) that addressed several needs in rural communities that impact people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices. PVA emphasized the importance of safe and accessible transportation, so mobility device users can engage with all aspects of everyday life. Specifically, PVA's comments addressed the lack of accessible sidewalks and other public rights-of-way in rural communities, including in the main downtown areas.

PVA recommended DOT provide resources or technical assistance to improve these conditions. In addition, PVA proposed DOT explore the expansion of the use of accessible autonomous vehicles in rural communities. Lastly, PVA underscored how extreme weather events and disasters can exacerbate transportation barriers, especially in rural areas. PVA urged DOT to expand research on plans to provide accessible transportation during and after emergency events.

### DOJ DELAYS COMPLIANCE DATES FOR WEB USER RULE

On April 20, the Department of Justice (DOJ) published an [Interim Final Rule](#) (IFR) delaying state and local government's compliance deadlines for its 2024 web accessibility rule under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The compliance date for state and local government entities with a total population of 50,000 or more was extended from April 24, 2026, to April 26, 2027. The compliance date for public entities with a total population of less than 50,000 was extended from April 26, 2027, to April 26, 2028.

DOJ published the final rule, [Nondiscrimination on the Bases of Disability: Accessibility of Web Information and Service of State and Local Government Entities](#), revising Title II regulations on April 24, 2024. The rule sets forth technical requirements for web content and mobile apps that state and local governments provide or make available to the public. In the IFR, the department states that the covered entities could suffer significant consequences if the compliance dates were not extended and that burden to the entities was underestimated. DOJ also states that regardless of compliance dates, covered entities still have an ongoing obligation to ensure that the services, programs, and activities offered through their web content and mobile apps are accessible to people with disabilities under their existing Title II obligations.

PVA joined with other disability organizations to express our concerns about the delay in implementation.



## HOUSE VA HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS MARKUP

On April 16, the House Veterans' Affairs Health Subcommittee held a markup of seven bills focused on improving care coordination, data collection and visibility, and patient navigation. One of the bills, the Veterans with ALS Reporting Act, was reported favorably out of the subcommittee and will now be considered by the full committee. This bill directs VA to produce a comprehensive report on the incidence of ALS in the veteran population, resources within VA and the Centers for Disease Control for veterans with ALS, a strategy to reduce ALS and provide more robust pathways for veterans to participate in clinical trials, and future steps to reduce barriers through legislation. You can watch the markup [here](#).

## HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ADVANCES FUNDING FOR VA

On April 21, the House Appropriations Committee approved its fiscal year 2027 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs (MilCon/VA) appropriations bill. This bill will provide roughly \$157 billion in discretionary funding and \$323.9 billion in mandatory spending, for a total approaching \$470 billion for VA; largely driven by increases in veteran's benefit payments. Overall, this bill provides a modest increase in spending on veterans' care and benefits, but VA's medical and prosthetic research funding line will see a decrease of about \$45 million under the enacted amount.

PVA is glad to see Congress's commitment to VA's core programs but remains concerned about whether incremental funding increases will keep pace with demand. We are also concerned about whether receding investments in research will slow the development of novel therapies and treatments for our members.

## HOUSE VA SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON VA BENEFITS

On April 21, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, led by

Chairman Morgan Luttrell (R-TX), conducted an oversight hearing to examine the delivery of the VA's pension, fiduciary, and life insurance benefits programs, which provide critical support for veterans and their families. Among the witnesses that testified were Tim Sirhal, Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits; Jennifer Bover, Executive Director of the Pension and Fiduciary Services; Tamra Sipes, National President of Gold Star Spouses of America; and Joseph Barnet, Vice President of the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance for Prudential Financial.

Chairman Luttrell emphasized the need for a clear and accountable system to ensure veterans receive their pension, fiduciary, and life insurance benefits in a timely manner. The hearing also highlighted recent work to restore constitutional due process rights for veterans assigned fiduciaries. Additionally, witnesses, including Ms. Sipes, testified on the impact of benefits, like Survivors Pension and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, on the survivors of those killed in action. To view the hearing, click [here](#).

## NEWS OF NOTE

### ACLU Releases Report on Voting Accessibility

On April 20, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a report titled, "[Vote-By-Mail Regimes and the Disability Turnout Gap: Evidence from a New Survey on Voting Accessibility in the United States](#)." The report analyzes the organization's recent disability turnout gap research, examines how disability effects turnout and voting experiences, and explains how different vote-by-mail systems relate to those outcomes. The report found that voters with disabilities face meaningful and measurable barriers throughout the entire voting process and easier access to mail voting reduces those barrier and turnout gaps. Based on the research findings, ACLU recommends expanding access to mail voting; moving away from restrictive excuse-required absentee systems; ensuring voting systems are accessible at every stage not just ballot delivery; including disability questions routinely in political surveys; and incorporating voter-file validation, where possible.

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## **PVA Participates in Department of Education Negotiated Rulemaking**

Recently, PVA Associate Legislative Director Julie Howell was nominated and selected to be a negotiator on behalf of student veterans and military learners for the Accreditation, Innovation, and Modernization (AIM) Committee. The AIM Committee is engaging in negotiated rulemaking at the Department of Education (ED). The committee will work through proposed regulatory text related to improving access for new accreditors in the higher education space. Negotiators represent a wide array of constituencies and stakeholders who will all negotiate language that will become the rules by which ED makes future decisions. The laborious process will take two weeks to complete, one week in April and the other in May. The break between offers negotiators time to draft and review proposals that offer changes to the baseline text put forward by ED.

## **Senate VA Committee Holds Hearing on Justice Involved Veterans**

Underlying challenges such as PTSD, substance use, and homelessness contribute to higher risk of arrest and incarceration for veterans. There are many state-level and VA programs that intercede on behalf of these 'justice involved veterans' through jail diversion, treatment courts, and reentry support, but capacity and coordination challenges persist nationwide.

On April 15, 2026, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee examined federal programs supporting justice-involved veterans. Veterans Treatment Courts and VA's Veterans Justice Outreach program were the focus of the hearing. Senators and witnesses emphasized the importance of coordination between VA, courts, and community providers to connect veterans to treatment, rather than incarceration. Testimony highlighted successes in reducing recidivism, but also pointed to gaps in program reach, inconsistent implementation across jurisdictions, and the need for better data and sustained funding. You can watch the hearing [here](#).

## **SURVEYS AND COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

### **REMINDER: FAA Survey for People with Disabilities About Aircraft Evacuation**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has launched a survey to gather feedback from passengers with disabilities regarding aircraft evacuations. The lack of research into the evacuation process for passengers with disabilities in air travel is a source of significant concern. Please provide FAA with your feedback [here](#).

### **Veterans' Committee Activities**

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

