



# Washington Update

Check out the [PVAAction Force](#) page to view our latest alerts and a list of key legislation and its status.

## **PVA SUBMITS COMMENTS ON MINIMUM SEAT DIMENSIONS ON AIRPLANES**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT), issued a [Request for Comments](#) on minimum seat dimensions of passenger seats on airplanes. The request sought comments on the minimum width, length, pitch or legroom, and other necessary dimensions for safety during airplane evacuations. Airplane seat widths and pitches have [significantly decreased](#) over the decades. Some airlines have [seat widths](#) as small as 16.5-inches and [pitches](#) as short as 28-inches. Although FAA conducted [evacuation simulations](#) in preparation of the request, the simulations excluded people with mobility disabilities and did not include older adults. [Evacuation procedures for individuals with disabilities](#) have not been updated since 1977.

PVA submitted [comments](#) explaining that small seat widths and pitches and narrow aisle widths cause safety issues for the evacuation of individuals with disabilities and older adults. The [Air Carrier Access Act](#) and DOT [Airline Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights](#) outline the fundamental rights of passengers with disabilities, including the right to be treated with dignity and respect. PVA contended that failure to consider the safety of people with disabilities fails to recognize these rights. The comment period ended on November 1, 2022.

## **HVAC HOLDS MARKUP ON CLOTHING ALLOWANCE LEGISLATION**

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) held a full committee markup on November 16 on legislation, including the Mark O'Brien VA Clothing Allowance Improvement Act (H.R. 4772). This legislation, which is now ready for the House floor, would make clothing allowance payments automatic until the VA determines the veteran is no longer eligible to receive the benefit. Companion legislation in the Senate is S. 2513, the Brian Neuman VA Clothing Allowance Improvement Act. We are hopeful that improvements to clothing allowance will pass this year. Please contact your members of Congress about this legislation by clicking [here](#).

## **PVA MEETS WITH U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

On November 9, PVA Advocacy Attorney, Danica Gonzalves, attended a roundtable discussion with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia, Department of Justice (DOJ), to discuss disability-based discrimination veterans face in the jurisdiction. Along with other veterans' organizations, PVA had the opportunity to raise significant issues impacting our members. Ms. Gonzalves relayed concerns of insufficient accessible parking, physical barriers at both public and private buildings, and lack of or inadequate curb ramps and sidewalks. PVA also emphasized the



need for DOJ to intervene in hotel bed heights, that are often too high for wheelchair users.

### VETERAN'S DAY IN OUR NATION'S CAPITAL

Last week, Washington, D.C. was alive with Veteran's Day celebrations. Several PVA Executive Committee members and National staff attended events throughout the Capital. This year marked one of the largest gatherings at Arlington National Cemetery since the COVID-19 pandemic began. This year was special for several veteran monuments as well. 2022 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam Wall Memorial. Established in 1982, the Vietnam Wall Memorial stands as a promise to never forget the service and sacrifice of Vietnam war veterans.

Additionally, this year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Military Women's Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. And after being delayed because of the pandemic, the Native American Veteran Memorial was finally able to hold its official opening ceremony on Veteran's Day.

### RESULTS OF THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS

The overwhelming majority of members currently serving on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) won their bids for reelection. The only loss as a direct result of the November 8 election was the Chair of HVAC's Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee, Elaine Luria. Representatives Madison Cawthorn (R-NC), Connie Conway (R-CA), and Conor Lamb (D-PA) lost their primaries or sought higher office and will not be returning to the chamber. Meanwhile, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee could be virtually unchanged in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress as four senators on the Committee won their respective races.

### UBER SENDS NOTIFICATIONS VIA APP AND EMAIL FOR WAIT TIME FEE REFUNDS

In response to a [settlement agreement](#) with the Department of Justice (DOJ), Uber is crediting more than 65,000 eligible riders with disabilities double the amount of wait time fees charged. Uber sent emails and app notifications to eligible riders. Eligible riders should

review their emails and Uber app in the "Uber hub" section to check whether they received a notification that they are eligible for ride credits or, in some cases, money payments.

In April 2016, Uber began charging customers wait time fees if the rider was unable to board the vehicle within two minutes. A lawsuit, filed in November 2021, alleged Uber violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by discriminating against people with disabilities for failing to modify its policy for individuals, who because of their disability, may need additional time to board the vehicle. In the DOJ settlement, Uber agreed to refund eligible riders and provide wait time fee waivers for future trips.

For the next two years, Uber will waive wait time fees for riders with disabilities who self-certify that they, or someone with whom they frequently travel, needs additional time to board a vehicle. Riders must fill out a [waiver](#) on the Uber app or online. Riders who do not fill out the waiver, but are charged wait time fees, can request a [refund](#) within 30 days. Information about the waivers is available on [Uber's website](#).

### NEWS OF NOTE

#### November is National Family Caregivers Month

The Administration for Community Living has posted resources for observing National Family Caregivers Month as well as information to assist caregivers. To learn more about available resources, please click [here](#).

#### NADTC Releases New Guide on Funding for Transportation Programs

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) has recently released a new resource guide on federal funding for transportation programs serving older adults and people with disabilities. The guide is available [here](#).





## HEARINGS & COMMITTEE ACTION

### **PVA Testifies at House Hearing on Improving Access to Air Travel**

On November 17, the House Transportation and Infrastructure, Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing titled, “Accessible Air Travel: Addressing Challenges for Passengers with Disabilities.” Heather Ansley, Associate Executive Director of Government Relations, testified on behalf of PVA. To watch the hearing, please click [here](#). To read the testimony, please click [here](#).

### **Upcoming Veterans’ Affairs Committee Action**

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