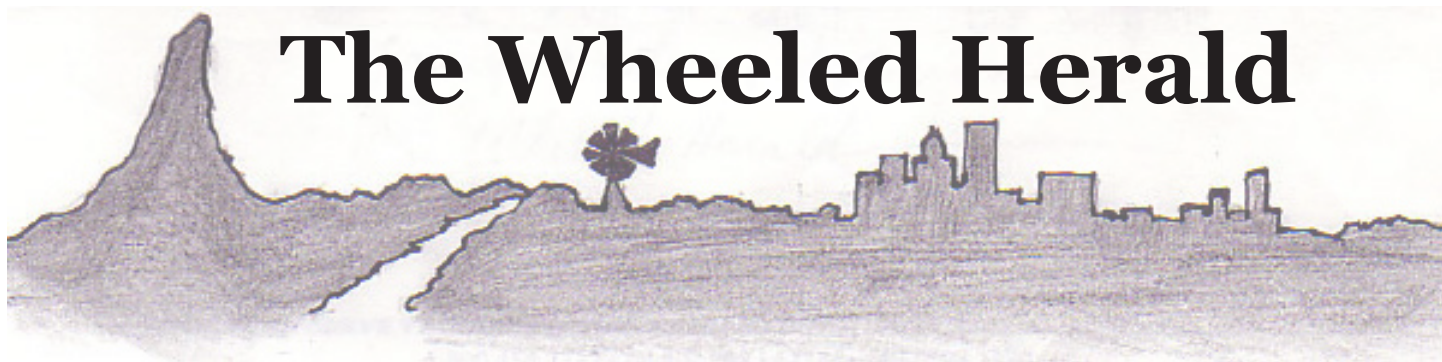


# The Wheeled Herald



Published by the Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter

Omaha, Nebraska

**Aug - Sept 2023**

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Great Plains Chapter

## Veterans Day

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**November 11, 2023**

## Two Ways to Support Local Veterans this Veterans Day from 10-2pm!

### A Clothing Drive



Drop off clothing & shoes  
at Great Plains PVA  
7612 Maple St.

### A Henry Rifle Raffle

Raffle tickets  
available for a  
chance to win  
a special edition  
Henry Rifle!



**Winner will be drawn at 2pm!**



**Proceeds support programs of Paralyzed Veterans of America.**

Questions? Contact Amanda at [vazquez@greatplainspva.org](mailto:vazquez@greatplainspva.org)

## **President's Message** *by Randy Squier*

As summer winds down the warmer temperatures should now be behind us. Went pretty fast didn't it? We still have plenty to do before the year is finished. Our power soccer in the gym Tuesday evenings started back up and our poker games on Thursday afternoon are well attended. They are always special and make for good conversation.

We hosted a "disc golf" clinic at the building with National PVA Sports & Recreation staff. We had a couple local disc golf enthusiasts join in to help with the clinic, and members of Wounded Warriors attended along with some of our own Great Plains PVA members. It was a lot of fun.

Our bowling league has renewed at Mockingbird lanes. Several opportunities exist for some of our bowlers as they'll travel to tournaments in Texas and Nevada before the year is through.

It's always good to see those friends that attend PVA events and I hope they get something out of our conversations. It's a great way to keep in touch with friends we've made along the way.

I hope you've enjoyed your summer because cooler temperatures will be here in no time. Just in time for Halloween. Until then Take care.



### **Chapter Officers**

Randy Squier, President  
John Scott, Vice President  
Will Leavitt, Secretary  
Seth Kotouc, Treasurer

### **Chapter Directors**

Dave Nelson, Director  
Dick Helvey, Director  
Tom Timmerman, Director

### **Immediate Past President**

Mark Linquist

### **National Director**

Dave Nelson

### **National Service Officer**

Mike Sheets  
402-420-4017  
MikeS@pva.org  
LauraN@pva.org

### **Executive Director**

Mary Bushman  
bushman@greatplainspva.org

### **Government Relations Director**

Amanda Vazquez  
vazquez@greatplainspva.org

### **Sports Director**

Patrick Reynolds  
reynolds@greatplainspva.org

**YOU ARE INVITED**  
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**HALLOWEEN PARTY**

**28 OCT** | **6-7:30 PM**

**Paralyzed Veterans of America Parking Lots**  
**7612 Maple Street**

This is a free event for Great Plains PVA members & their families and children with special needs and their families!

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# **VA Paper Checks are Being Discontinued**

*By Mike Sheets, Eastern Region Director*

As a result of 31 CFR Part 208 - Management of Federal Agency Disbursements, VA will no longer issue paper checks after October 1, 2023. Instead, VA will distribute payments through the electronic funds transfer system (EFT), as required by law.

Any caregiver receiving paper checks from VA as part of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) must enroll in direct deposit by October 1 to continue receiving stipend benefits.

Caregivers can enroll in direct deposit as a vendor through VA's Customer Engagement Portal. To complete the required form, caregivers will need their social security number, address, and bank routing and account numbers. Step-by-step instructions for enrolling can be found in the CSP Direct Deposit Enrollment User Guide.

For those without a financial institute, visit the Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP) for options to receiving VA benefits via direct deposit without using a bank.

Primary Family Caregivers may also contact the VA Financial Service Center (FSC) Customer Care Center at 1-877-353-9791 for further assistance.

I encourage all VA beneficiaries who still receive a paper check from the VA to ensure they enroll in direct deposit by October 1. If you need assistance finding out how to set up a direct deposit, please contact our office and we can track down the appropriate form.

## **Great Plains PVA at Nebraska Governor's Welcome Home Picnic**



Great Plains PVA staff Mary Bushman & Amanda Vazquez, along with PVA Eastern Region Director Mike Sheets, attended the Nebraska Governor's Welcome Home Picnic on August 24th for recently returning servicemembers and their families. This event is held every year at the Governor's mansion; however, due to the extreme heat this year, it was moved inside the nearby Masonic Lodge.

The event provided a great opportunity for us to connect with servicemembers, other VSOs and organizations serving veterans, as well as an opportunity to greet the Governor and other Department of Veterans Affairs staff. We shared information about our chapter and the programs and services we provide for veterans with spinal cord injuries/diseases.

*Pictured from left to right:*

*Mike Sheets, Governor Pillen, Amanda Vazquez, & Mary Bushman*



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Paralyzed Veterans of America

Great Plains Chapter

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**STREAM**

**NE Husker  
Game**

Pizza Dinner  
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the fun!

**Friday  
Oct. 6th**

**7612 Maple St. Omaha**



**RSVP by 10/2 - [vazquez@greatplainspva.org](mailto:vazquez@greatplainspva.org).**

# **Executive Director's Report**

*by Mary Bushman*

Hello Members,

This past July the chapter hosted its annual Great Plains PVA Invitational Wheelchair Bowling Tournament. Even though it was the event's sixth year, there were a lot of firsts in this year's tournament!

- This was the tournament's first year at Mockingbird Lanes in Omaha. It was great to bring the event to Omaha and the staff at Mockingbird worked with us to make it a very positive transition for the bowlers.
- This was the first year we had an on-site pro shop open daily to assist tournament bowlers. A very special thank you to The Bowling Store and Pro Shop for their wonderful support throughout the 4-day event.
- The tournament was so pleased to welcome its first international team! Four bowlers from Sweden traveled over 4,500 miles to bowl with us. The bowlers and their support team immersed themselves in the tournament and many new friendships were made.
- This was the first year the tournament included a 3-person team event! Twelve teams of three wheelchair bowlers competed on Thursday afternoon during a 3-game competition. Congratulations to the Swedish team for taking first place!
- This was the tournament's first year on the new National PVA Wheelchair Bowling Series. Under the new series rules, chapters sanction their tournament directly through the United States Bowling Congress (USBC) without collaboration with the AWBA. Thank you to the Bowling Store and Pro Shop for its training and assistance with sanctioning procedures.

This year's tournament was a record-breaking year with 42 bowlers from across the United States and Sweden competing. The tournament kicked off with Thursday's Doubles and 3-Person Team events. Eighteen teams of two competed in Doubles with the team of Jennifer Hooten and Curtis Wolff taking 1st place. Congratulations to Great Plains PVA members Will Leavitt and Chris Parnell for their 2nd place finish!

Twelve teams of three competed in the new 3-Person Team event with our own Great Plains PVA league bowlers making a great showing. Congratulations to the team of Mark Linquist, Randy Squier and Toodie Perry for their 3rd place finish. Congratulations also to James Beversdorf, Seth Kotouc and Gary Standley for finishing fourth.

The 3-day singles competition included both scratch and handicap divisions with ramp and non-ramp bowlers. Some bowlers were newer to the sport, others were returning champions, and some were members of the USA Para Bowling Team. It was exciting to watch the bowlers support each other and enjoy a common love for the sport. Congratulations to Tournament Director Dave Nelson for his 6th place finish in the scratch division and to Randy Squier for placing in the top 10 in his handicap division.

Thank you to the 128 local bowlers who joined the tournament's wheelchair bowlers on Friday night for the Up/Down event. The energy level was high and so were the bowling scores! Thank you also to the wonderful volunteers who facilitated the night's silent auction, raffles and 50/50! Thanks to everyone's generosity, we surpassed our goals for the evening.

The Great Plains PVA Board and staff work hard each year to make this tournament one of the best wheelchair bowling tournaments in the country. We look forward to once again bringing bowlers together for the 2024 tournament.











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# Omaha Power Soccer Club Recognized at Union Omaha Game

*by Amanda Vazquez*

The Omaha Power Soccer Club, a program of Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter, kicked off its fall season with a team outing to a Union Omaha soccer game at Werner Park in Papillion. The players and their families were joined by their coaches and invited down on the field before the Union game. A video of the team practicing was shown on the jumbotron for the entire stadium to see, and then the cameraman zoomed in on the team. It was a great opportunity to create awareness of this unique program, and such a cool opportunity for these players to be recognized. After their spotlight, the assistant coach for Union Omaha came over and greeted each player individually.

The players, families, coaches, and I then found our seats and enjoyed an exciting game of soccer together! It was a fun, team bonding event and even Hoot, Union's mascot, joined the group for a picture! Thanks to Coach Kylie for encouraging the team outing and Coach Mitch for coordinating the new kits! We are grateful for our coaches and families who support this incredible program.

Special thanks to Mobility Motoring for sponsoring the purchase of the players kits!



Special thanks to  
Mobility Motoring  
& GottaBeMe  
for their sponsorship of the  
Omaha Power Soccer Club.





# PVA Adaptive Disc Golf Clinic

*by Amanda Vazquez*

Great Plains PVA hosted an adaptive disc golf clinic funded and organized by PVA National staff and coordinated with Jeff Shattuck with the American Disc Golf Association. Great Plains PVA extended the invitation to the Wounded Warrior Project network and between both organizations, we had 16 people attend the clinic and try out this new opportunity.

Participants practiced throwing the different types of discs at different distances, both inside and outside. While the weather cooperated, we placed disc golf baskets across our parking lot for a mini 3-hole course. When the rain came, we moved indoors to our full size gymnasium to continue with some putting practice.

The group took a break for lunch and enjoyed a catered box lunch from Jimmy John's generously provided by Wounded Warrior Project. After lunch, Jeff set up a putting course and six of the participants competed. Prizes were awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in 2 categories - so everyone won something!

As part of the grant for this clinic, Great Plains is able to keep the equipment provided, so we are looking forward to offering some disc golf opportunities in the near future! Thanks to the size of our facility, we can offer and indoor option for play during the winter and expand outside as the weather warms up again.

Special thanks to Vickie Lincks and Jeff Shattuck for their insight and instruction and bringing this opportunity to our chapter! Thank you also to local disc golf enthusiasts for sharing their excitement and knowledge of disc golf!



*Above: Full group photo of participants, instructors and volunteers that helped throughout the day.  
Below: PVA and Wounded Warrior veterans practicing their throwing skills.*





*Below: Participants practiced putting and then joined in a friendly putting competition!*





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**July Challenge**

The July Challenge was a short duration sandwich chipper, which is a couplet with the reps of one of the exercises split in half, separated by the other exercise. This one was 84 pulls (ring rows, ring pullups or pulldowns) and 21 ground to shoulder (medball or barbell). Below is the format and results for the July Challenge:

- **Format**
  - For Time:
    - 42 Pulls
    - 21 Ground to Shoulder
    - 42 Pulls
      - Pulls – ring rows, pullups or pulldowns
      - Ground to Shoulder – medball or barbell
- **Results**
  - 1. Chris Parnell – 4:52
  - 2. Ethan Eckelbarger – 5:34
  - 3. Tim Hobbs – 6:23
  - 4. Barry Ridout – 6:26
  - 5. Travis Hasenkamp – 6:32
  - 6. Daniel Schmitt – 7:22
  - 7. Seth Kotouc – 7:48
  - 8. Josh Maier – 8:12

**2023 PVAFit Team Competition**

We have normally done our in-house team competition late fall, but this year we started late summer so Josh could compete before he left the country for his wheelchair basketball season. We had four teams of two (Travis/Josh, Daniel/Tim, Barry/Seth and Chris/Ethan) that competed in eight scored events over six weeks. Overall the workouts went well, though I can always find improvements to be made in the programming. However, I don't know what I could've done in the interest of fairness that would've stopped Travis and Josh from winning the 2023 team competition. They won 6 of the 8 events and were far enough ahead before the final event that they could've not done it, scored a zero, and still won the competition by 39 points. Below are the event winners and final leaderboard of the 2023 team competition:

- **Event Winners**
  - Ethan Eckelbarger & Chris Parnell – 1 Win (Event One)
  - Travis Hasenkamp & Josh Maier – 6 Wins (Events Two, Three, Four, Five, Six & Seven)
  - Daniel Schmitt & Tim Hobbs – 1 Win (Event Eight)
- **Leaderboard**
  - 1. Travis Hasenkamp & Josh Maier – 761 points
  - 2. Ethan Eckelbarger & Chris Parnell – 654 points
  - 3. Daniel Schmitt & Tim Hobbs – 625 points
  - 4. Barry Ridout & Seth Kotouc – 556 points

**2023 October Challenge**

It's hard to function with a near max heart rate. That's probably the reason people make such stupid decisions in horror movies. The October Challenge will be 23 minutes at a near max heart rate and I'm excited to watch it unfold. It's a double-couplet, max reps in 3-minute intervals horror movie that will test your desire to win. Below is the format for the October Challenge:

- **Six 3-Minute Rounds for Max Reps:**
  - Rounds 1-3,
    - Calorie Row (Standing – 24, Seated – 12, Quad – 8)
    - Max Dips
      - 1 Minute Rest
  - Rounds 4-6,
    - 25 Knee or Chair Burpees
    - Max Calorie Ski
      - 1 Minute Rest





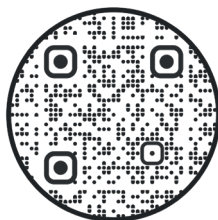
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## Upcoming Events

**Omaha Power Soccer Club practices on Tuesdays 6-8pm at Great Plains PVA thru Nov 7th!**

*\*No practice on October 10th and 31st\**

### October

6th:	Chapter Tailgate	6:00pm
9th:	Indigenous Peoples' Day	
12th:	BOD Meeting	1:00pm
28th:	Trunk or Treat	6:00-7:30pm
31st:	Happy Halloween!	

### November

9th:	BOD Meeting	1:00pm
10th:	Veterans Day (observed)	
11th:	Happy Veterans Day! Clothing Drive & Rifle Raffle Drawing!	TBD
23rd:	Happy Thanksgiving!	
28th:	Giving Tuesday	

### December

8th:	Chapter Christmas Party	5:30pm
25th:	Merry Christmas!	

## CHAPTER BIRTHDAYS

### September

John McDonald \* Tedd Johnson \* Dennis Mitchell \* John Speck \* Larry Dawson \*  
Charles Howard \* Carl Schaffner \* James Neal \* Christopher Parnell \* William Leavitt \*  
Jabari Wright

### October

Stephanie Bushman \* John Slobodnik \* Byron Coghlan \* Stephen Whitemore \* Richard  
Eisenhardt \* Richard Arab \* Grant Rhoades \* Kevin Garner \* Michael Killin \* Frank Hussman \*  
Gregory Minow

### November

Peggy Moore \* James Moran \* Jackie Denker \* Tommy Hefley \* Alan Mann \* Leanne Irsik \*  
Ruth Pike \* Mark Linquist \* Lenora Kenwolf \* John Scott \* Patrick Fraenza \* Kelly Wubbels \*  
Andrea Banicki





# Washington Update

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

## FEDERAL FUNDING UPDATE

Congress is back in session and much of their effort in September is focused on passing the 12 annual funding bills or a continuing resolution to keep the government open. The specter of a government shutdown has resurfaced, but we are hopeful lawmakers will act to prevent that from happening. As a reminder, much of VA is largely protected in the event of a shutdown thanks to the work of PVA and our veterans service organization partners to secure advance appropriations for the Department. We will be watching the budgetary process closely and provide updates when appropriate.

## VETERANS OMNIBUS PACKAGE BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE

The leaders of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees met during the August recess and reached an informal agreement on rules they will use to compile a package of veterans-related legislation into a single bill for passage later this year. They have yet to decide exactly which provisions would be included in the omnibus, but all four leaders have expressed a desire to include the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act (H.R. 542/S. 141). We also understand that other provisions might focus on education, VA's electronic health record modernization project, and VA employee accountability. The Committees expressed hope in having the bill put together and passed prior to Veterans Day. Although

that is an ambitious timeline, PVA will focus on advocating for its passage prior to the end of the year.

## HHS ISSUES PROPOSED RULE TO UPDATE LAW THAT PROHIBITS DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [issued](#) a proposed rule to update its prohibition against discrimination on the basis of disability under [Section 504](#) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504, passed 50 years ago, prohibits disability discrimination in programs and activities run by federal agencies or that receive federal financial assistance. HHS is [proposing to amend](#) its existing regulations to outline obligations that are not explicitly addressed in Section 504. The proposed rule covers access to medical care, including nondiscrimination in life-sustaining care and participation in clinical trials; enforceable standards for medical equipment, including accessible weight scales and heights for medical diagnostic equipment; and the integration of people with disabilities into a setting most appropriate for their needs. The proposed rule also seeks to improve consistency with the developments of the Americans with Disabilities Act, such as requirements to maintain accessible features of facilities and equipment, permitting individuals to use powered-driven mobility devices in areas open to the public, and accessibility design standards for facilities. The comment period is open until November 13.





## **SUPREME COURT WILL HEAR ADA HOTEL WEBSITE TESTER CASE IN OCTOBER**

The oral argument for the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Acheson Hotels, LLC v. Laufer*, will be held on October 4. The question before the Court is whether a “tester” can bring a lawsuit for a hotel’s failure to provide accessibility information on their website. Deborah Laufer, a mobility assistive device user and self-deemed “tester,” regularly visits hotel websites checking whether they have information about physical accessibility. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act’s (ADA) reservation rule, hotels must identify and describe the accessibility features of the hotel and guest rooms in enough detail for a guest to decide if the hotel will meet their needs. Laufer found that the hotel had no accessibility information on the website and sued, though she had no plans to reserve a room at that hotel.

The Court’s opinion could impact when an individual has the right to sue under the ADA. PVA joined a brief to the Court, with 17 other disability rights organizations, to explain the importance of ADA lawsuits. Although PVA actively encourages advocates to work with the company and use other avenues for advocacy, the Supreme Court’s ruling could determine when a person has the right to sue under the ADA. The audio and transcript of the oral argument will be posted on the Court’s website.

## **PVA AND CCD URGE AMTRAK TO HOLD NEW, ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC HEARING**

Amtrak held a [hybrid public meeting](#) on Wednesday, August 30, to discuss accessibility for riders with disabilities, focusing on their new long-distance trainsets. After the meeting, Amtrak accepted comments on their website only until September 8. Unfortunately, Amtrak did not robustly advertise the hearing or the opportunity to submit feedback on their main webpages nor contact customers that had purchased tickets with disability accommodations in the past. As a result, very few people attended the hearing.

Danica Gonzalves, PVA Advocacy Attorney, attended the public hearing in person. Ms. Gonzalves is also a co-chair

for the [Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities](#) (CCD) Transportation Task Force. On September 8, Ms. Gonzalves and fellow CCD Transportation Task Force co-chairs sent a letter with feedback to Amtrak. The letter emphasized how Amtrak failed to fully include passengers with disabilities in their public hearing. The CCD Transportation Task Force co-chairs urged Amtrak to hold a new, accessible public hearing that was widely advertised to riders with disabilities and reopen the comment period for feedback.

## **THE REHAB ACT TURNS 50**

September 26 marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs receiving federal financial assistance or conducted by federal agencies, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors. A powerful law in its own right, the law also paved the way for the Americans with Disabilities Act and other advancements in disability rights.

In addition, the Rehab Act created the Independent Living Services program, the Centers for Independent Living program, and the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, all of which are part of the Administration for Community Living (ACL) today.

While there is still work to be done, the law shepherded a new era in disability rights and it serves as a cornerstone in a foundation we continue to build upon today. Updates on actions being taken in honor of the anniversary will be shared via [ACL Updates](#).

## **LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY IN VA INTRODUCED IN THE SENATE**

Prior to the August recess, Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) introduced S. 2516, the Veterans Accessibility Act of 2023. This legislation would create a VA advisory committee to assess the accessibility of electronic information, buildings, facilities, structures, services, and benefits, as well as

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care furnished by health care providers. The committee would be tasked with collecting recommendations to improve compliance to federal accessibility laws such as sections 501, 504, and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other laws to ensure equal access to buildings, benefits, and services for people with disabilities.

PVA supports the legislation and worked extensively on the draft bill. We are currently supporting efforts to have this legislation introduced in the House.

### VA HOLDS CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

At the beginning of September, VA held the Women's Health Services Research Conference. This is the second time the event has been held. It brings VA providers from across the country together to discuss new research being conducted around women's health.

Topics covered included using evidence-based interventions to treat post-partum depression, mental health concerns, aging care and menopause treatment, as well as suicide prevention and labor force participation. Several breakout sessions were held that focused on a range of fields such as reproductive health, addressing trauma and harassment, delivering women veterans' health care in rural areas, as well as engagement and retention of women within the VA system of care.

This was the first conference dedicated to women's health held in nine years and VA hopes to hold the event more frequently in the future. The research conducted by VA on women's health has lasting implications in the broader health care arena.

### NEWS OF NOTE

#### September is National Voter Registration Month

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) wants to remind citizens that September is [National Voter Registration Month](#). Every September since 2002, NASS recognizes this month to encourage voter

registration and to recommend existing voters check and update their registration status, if needed.

Learn more about your state's voter registration requirements and much more by visiting [canivote.org](https://canivote.org), a nonpartisan website created by NASS to help equip voters with the election information they need.

#### DOJ Finds Two New Jersey VA Homes Subject Residents to Harm and Risk to Deadly Infections

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey recently [concluded an investigation](#) of two veterans' homes, operated by the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. DOJ investigated the facilities to determine whether there was a pattern or practice of a deprivation of constitutional rights, under a federal law that applies to state and local government-run residential institutions. The investigation found the homes have inadequate infection control practices and inadequate medical care, compounded by a lack of effective management and oversight, that exposed residents to unreasonable harm and risk for serious and deadly infections. The investigation determined these practices resulted in increased resident deaths.

Following its investigation, DOJ [recommended](#) the state implement adequate infection control procedures, systematically provide medical and physical care consistent with accepted professional standards, maintain valid and reliable quality management data, and implement oversight and accountability mechanisms. DOJ plans to work with the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to improve the conditions in these homes and ensure veterans and their families receive the care they need and deserve.



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Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter (Great Plains PVA) is a non-profit organization that has dedicated over 50 years to helping veterans with spinal cord injuries, as well as other individuals living with disabilities across Nebraska, Western-Iowa, and Kansas. Great Plains PVA is dedicated to improving quality of life by providing education, promoting equal opportunities, encouraging independence, and enhancing lifetime health and fitness. PVA is at the forefront helping and advocating for the rights and benefits of veterans and all people living with disabilities.