

The Wheeled Herald



Published by the Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter

Omaha, Nebraska

Aug - Sep 2025

**Inside This
Issue**

President's Report

BOD Election Results

ED Report

New PVA NSO

Bowling League

Upcoming Events

Caregiver Event

Adaptive Fitness

Trunk or Treat

Adapted Cornhole

Billiards Tournament

Washington Update

Ladies Auxiliary



Great Plains Chapter

7612 Maple Street
Omaha, NE 68134
tel. 402.398.1422
fax: 402.398.1424

e-mail: pva@greatplainspva.org
www.greatplainspva.org

PVA Billiards Series Tournament **Hosted by Great Plains PVA**



President's Message *by Randy Squier*

The clock is ticking, and the calendar is not stopping for us. The leaves are changing and autumn will be here soon. But our calendar of events has not slowed down.



Having just finished the billiards tournament at Big John's billiards here in Omaha, I can tell you that we had another good turnout with some great people. It was a great learning experience for me as my pool game continues to improve to try to keep up with the other players. Those who attended came with determination and earned their metal by making some great shots during two full days of the 9-ball competition. There was good pool play, good friendships, and great food, leaving us all eager for next year. It was another spectacular outing as I watch the efforts of our staff, volunteers and members put on a great performance. I saw some familiar faces and made some new friendships. Thank you to all that participated. Onto the next one.

Chapter Officers

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

Chapter Directors

Dave Nelson, Director
Tom Timmerman, Director
Shayna Goerd, Director

Immediate Past President

Mark Linquist

National Director

Dave Nelson

National Service Officer

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

Executive Director

Mary Bushman
bushman@greatplainspva.org

Government Relations

Director &

Newsletter Editor

Amanda Vazquez
vazquez@greatplainspva.org

Sports Director

Patrick Reynolds
reynolds@greatplainspva.org

MS/Women Veterans Lead

Shayna Goerd
shayna@greatplainspva.org

Our bowling league continues at Mockingbird Lanes on Wednesday afternoons at 1pm. Our poker games continue Thursday afternoons at noon at the chapter. And now we'll be working in a few sessions of the world famous cornhole competition coming up in November.

Our "trunk or treat" at the chapter is scheduled for October 25. I hope you find time to bring a few of the kids around for a barrier free outing of trick-or-treating. Another great community supported event.

Before you know it, we'll be talking about the Christmas holidays. Come and join us if you can...

In the meantime, stay safe.

BOD Election Results

Thank you to Great Plains PVA members who voted in our recent election to elect our new Board of Directors for 2025-2026. The results confirmed the following seven members to serve another term on the board:

- Shayna Goerd
- Seth Kotouc
- Will Leavitt
- Dave Nelson
- John Scott
- Randy Squier
- Tom Timmerman

Congratulations! We look forward to another year with your leadership guiding our chapter's efforts.



HELP US STAY CONNECTED!

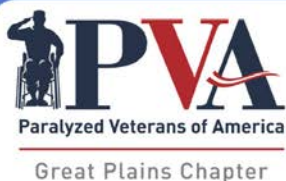
In an effort to keep our records current, please contact Amanda at the chapter office 402-398-1422 or vazquez@greatplainspva.org with any updates or changes to your email address, mailing address, or phone number. We want to ensure you stay informed of chapter activities, VA health care and benefits changes, and other issues affecting veterans and people with disabilities.

NSO Report - Welcoming New National Service Officer in Nebraska



We are excited to introduce you to Destiny Payne, who recently joined our team as a National Service Officer in Lincoln, Nebraska. Destiny will be working alongside Mike Sheets and Lisa Nibling to support our veterans.

Destiny was born and raised in Lincoln, where she continues to reside today with her husband, their young daughter, and their dog. Her journey began in the U.S. Army, where she served as a 25U Signal Support Systems Specialist. She earned the rank of Sergeant (E-5) and completed an overseas deployment. Her military experiences taught her resilience, teamwork, and a profound sense of responsibility towards others, principles that continue to guide her in her professional life. After her military service, Destiny worked in law enforcement before becoming a County Veterans Service Officer. From there, she joined the Veterans Benefits Administration and gained an even deeper understanding of the VA system and how to better serve those who depend on it.



BOWLING LEAGUE IS RECRUITING!

Not sure if it's right for you?
Come check us out on **Wednesdays at 1pm at
Mockingbird Lanes** in Omaha.

**Bowl for FREE for up to 3 weeks and then
decide if you'd like to join the league.**

Meet other PVA members and learn some
great coaching tips while you're there.

Regular league fees are \$10/week.

Questions?

Contact Dave Nelson at 402-208-4841.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Bowling Fall League

Wednesdays @
1:00pm at
Mockingbird Lanes



Omaha Power
Soccer Club
practices begin
9/9 @ 6-8pm
at Great Plains
PVA



9-Ball Billiards Tournament

Sept 19-20
at Big John's
Billiards

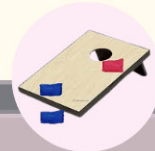


Make It Take It
Event for Caregivers
& Ladies Auxiliary
October 7th
6-8pm at
Great Plains PVA



Trunk or Treat

Saturday,
October 25th
6-7:30pm at
Great Plains PVA



Cornhole
Clinic
Nov 7th: 5-8pm
Tournament
Nov 8th:
11am-4pm



Veterans Day
November 11th

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SERVICE!**



Christmas Party
December 5th
6-8pm at
Great Plains PVA
Join us for dinner
& games!





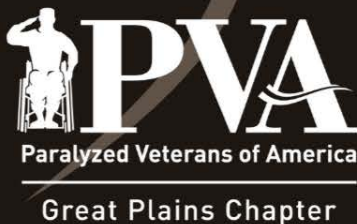
Limited
space
available!

Sign Up
Here!



CAREGIVER MAKE IT TAKE IT EVENT

FREE event for caregivers of someone with a disability.



at Great Plains PVA, 76th & Maple St.
Tuesday, October 7, 2025
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Questions? Email Amanda at vazquez@greatplainspva.org

The 2025 WheelWod Games

The 2025 WheelWod Games is almost upon us, and PVA fitness athlete Daniel Schmitt is prepped and ready. This year's Games are being held in Las Vegas, Nevada September 11-14. If you would like to follow the competition this year, they will be broadcasted through the WheelWod YouTube channel and I will provide Daniel's heat times via our Facebook page (Great Plains PVA adaptive fitness).

August Challenge Format and Results

This challenge workout was a descending rep chipper of a travel (run or handbike), pull and push. There were seven sections to this chipper, with the first three being the bulk of the workout. Once they got back to the Air Runner or handbike, they really had to up the tempo if they wanted to win this workout, which is what Tim did. He's been stacking up good workouts lately. It's been weird and I do not have an explanation that doesn't involve performance enhancing drugs. An investigation is ongoing. Below are the format(s) and results of our August Challenge:

- Format for Standing, Seated w/Hip Function and Seated w/o Hip Function Divisions
 - For Time:
 - 600 Meter Run, 1 Mile or 1,280 Meter Handbike
 - 60 Jumping Pullups or Pulldowns
 - 30 Pushups or 60-30 Dips
 - 300 Meter Run, 800 Meter or 640 Meter Handbike
 - 20 Jumping Pullups or Pulldowns
 - 10 Pushups or 20-10 Dips
 - 150 Meter Run, 400 Meter or 320 Meter Handbike
- Leaderboard
 - 1. Tim Hobbs – 13:33
 - 2. Ethan Eckelbarger – 13:37
 - 3. Travis Hasenkamp – 14:20
 - 4. Daniel Schmitt – 15:18
 - 5. Barry Ridout – 15:23
 - 6. Chris Parnell – 15:35
 - 7. Bruce Froendt – 18:15

September Challenge Format

This challenge workout is similar in feel to the August challenge. It is a pyramid chipper with a five-minute rest in the middle. Only 1/3 of the total work is left after the rest break, so the competitors have to move as fast as they can through the first half because you really cannot dig out of a hole after. This workout consists of a sled push/drag, ski, cleans and burpees. There will be differing workloads for the standing and seated divisions. Below is the basic format for the September Challenge:

- For Time:
 - 720' sled push/drag
 - 800, 640 or 540 meter ski
 - 40 hang clean & jerk/medball cleans from blocks
 - 20 burpees or 40 chair burpees
 - *5 minute rest*
 - 10 burpees or 20 chair burpees
 - 20 hang clean & jerk/medball cleans from blocks
 - 400, 320 or 270 meter ski
 - 360' sled push/drag



Upcoming Events

October

9th: BOD Meeting 1:00pm
13th: Indigenous Peoples' Day - Office Closed
25th: Trunk or Treat
28th: Omaha Power Soccer Club last practice of the season
31st: Happy Halloween!

November

11th: Veterans Day
13th: BOD Meeting 1:00pm
Volunteer Appreciation Night at Mockingbird Lanes at 5:00pm
27th: Thanksgiving - Office Closed

December

5th: Chapter Christmas Party
11th: BOD Meeting 1:00pm
25th: Merry Christmas!

- » Texas Hold'em games held every Thursday (except BOD meeting days) at the Chapter office at 12pm.
- » Billiards League practices at Big John's on Fridays from 2-4pm.
- » Bowling League practices every Wednesday at Mockingbird Lanes at 1pm.

CHAPTER BIRTHDAYS

October

Gregory Minow * Frank Hussman * Michael Killin * Kevin Garner * Grant Rhoades *
Timothy Dixon * Richard Arab * Stephen Whitemore * Byron Coghlan * John Slobodnik

November

Keaton Todd * Andrea Banicki * Travis Sterns * Kelly Wubbels * Gregory Peterson * Patrick Fraenza *
John P. Scott * Lenora Kenwolf * Matthew McCullor * Mark Linquist * Robert Compton * Ruth Pike *
Leanne Irsik * Alan Mann * Tommy Hefley * Jackie Denker * James Moran * Orson Robinson, Jr.

December

Garret Wiley * Shayna Goerdts * Stormy Brandt * Renee Barnes * Michael Webb * Thomas Gerber *
Daniel Wick * Alexander Tomic

TRUNK OR TREAT HALLOWEEN PARTY

COME JOIN THE FUN !



25
OCT

6-7:30
PM

Paralyzed Veterans of America Parking Lots
7612 Maple Street

This is a free event for disabled veterans and
other individuals with special needs and their families!

PRESENTED BY:



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



PVA Billiards Series Tournament

Hosted by Great Plains PVA

by Amanda Vazquez

Great Plains PVA held its 2nd annual 9-Ball Tournament on the PVA Billiards Series on September 19-20 at Big John's Billiards in Omaha.

One of our chapter goals this year was to increase the number of participants at our tournament, and we are happy to say we achieved that goal with a growth of nearly 50%! We welcomed players from Nebraska, California, Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, and Virginia. One of the players is a 2-time Womens World Champion in 9-Ball! The two days were filled with camaraderie, laughs and a lot of 9-ball games!

Players began the tournament in a full bracket. After two losses, players would then move to the second flight. Players who did not have two losses remained in the main flight. We also had a separate division for our players who have Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Congratulations to Great Plains PVA members Chris Parnell for winning 1st place in the Main Flight and Lanna Vestal for placing 1st in the MS Division. Great Plains PVA members Will Leavitt and Randy Squier placed 3rd and 4th respectively in the Second Flight.

We set up a silent auction again this year due to its popularity at last year's event. We increased the number of items featured, had it set up for the full two days, and included a variety of items for men and women of all ages. We also had a couple of 50/50 raffles that were optional in which players and guests could participate.

Our Ladies Auxiliary President, Tammy Squier, used her culinary skills and catered lunch for the event both days. She provided a sandwich lunch mimiced after Jimmy John's, complete with a pickle spear, chips, and a brownie on the first day. The second day, she made her famous pulled pork, cole slaw, and potato salad for the awards luncheon.

During the awards luncheon, Jeff Dolezal with the National Wheelchair Poolplayers Association (NWPA) presented awards on behalf of National PVA for the 2025 PVA Billiards Series. Charles Interrante was awarded as the Series Champion and Chris Parnell (from Great Plains PVA) was awarded Top Veteran PVA Member. They are pictured below.

Over the two days, we offered a skills contest for anyone wanting to participate. Jeff & Kathy Dolezal worked to create a set of skills contests to test each player's ability. This was good practice for both novice and skilled players to work on different types of shots and different angles. Special thanks to Kathy for running the contest throughout the two days.

We'd also like to thank Shawn Interrante for keeping score and running the brackets for the tournament, Big John's owner and staff for working with us to ensure an enjoyable and successful event, and Woody the Ref for overseeing and monitoring game play.



PVA Billiards Series Awards

Champion:
Charles Interrante
(pictured at left)

Top Veteran/
PVA Member:
Chris Parnell
(pictured at right)



Billiards Tournament Pictures





Main Flight

1st Place: Chris Parnell

2nd Place: Dan Hall

3rd Place: Hydréd Goldberg

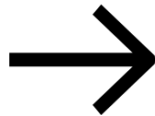


Second Flight

1st Place: Jeff Anderson

2nd Place: Darryl Rahn

3rd Place: Will Leavitt



MS Division

1st Place: Lanna Vestal

2nd Place: Shayna Goerdt

3rd Place: Bill Connor



ADAPTED CORNHOLE

CLINIC & TOURNAMENT

NO ENTRY FEE

CLINIC
NOV 7
5-8PM

TOURNAMENT
NOV 8
11-4PM

3 DIVISIONS
SEATED
STANDING
ADAPTED MIXED



**PRIZES WILL BE
AWARDED IN ALL
3 DIVISIONS!**

**COMPLETE THE
ENTRY FORM TO
REGISTER FOR
THE EVENT.**



LOCATION:
GREAT PLAINS PVA
7612 MAPLE ST.
OMAHA



www.greatplainspva.org



402-398-1422

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 16, 2025

Press Release

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Janelle Beswick, Public Affairs Officer

(531) 389-7727 (Cell phone)

vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov

VA Whole Health services moving to former Bellevue VA Clinic

OMAHA, NE - Whole Health Services and providers at the Omaha VA Medical Center and Sarpy County VA Clinic are moving to 2206 Longo Drive in Bellevue on Monday, September 22, 2025. This location was the site of the Bellevue VA Clinic until September 2024, when those services moved to the Sarpy County VA Clinic, a larger space at 1330 Jersey Street in Papillion.

VA Whole Health is a person-centered approach that focuses on a Veteran's personal values, needs, and goals to support their overall health and well-being. It uses complementary and integrative health services to treat or prevent health concerns, including pain management and mental health.

"This move will allow all Whole Health services to be provided from one dedicated location focused on wellness and holistic care," said Katie Jenkins, Acting Chief of Whole Health. "We're excited to offer these services in a space that is suited to supporting Veterans on their Whole Health journey."

The following services are moving to the Bellevue location:

- Chiropractic Care
- Massage Therapy
- Acupuncture/Battlefield Acupuncture
- Creative Arts
- Health Coaching
- Whole Health Education Classes
- Movement Classes including Yoga, Tai Chi and Foam Rolling



Music Therapy, Integrative Nutrition and Integrative Case Management will remain at the Omaha VA Medical Center. Chiropractic care will also continue to be offered at the Sarpy County VA Clinic. This facility will be open Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. No walk-in services are available. Veterans interested in Whole Health services can call the new Whole Health clinic at 402-744-7300 beginning on September 22.

For more information, please contact vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov.

###

Media contacts

Janelle Beswick, Public affairs officer

Phone: 402-995-4719

janelle.beswick@va.gov



Washington Update

[WATCH PVA National President Robert Thomas testify before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on Strengthening Services for Veterans with SCI/D](#) We will have more coverage in the next Update.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING UPDATE

It's the middle of September and Congress finds itself in a familiar place, staring at a possible government shutdown. The current fiscal year ends on September 30, and Congress has yet to finalize any of the 12 annual funding bills. Once again, lawmakers will need to use a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government running past the end of the month. A CR extends funding into the new fiscal year, usually at the previous year's levels. On September 19, the House passed a short-term bill primarily along party lines to fund the government through the week before Thanksgiving. A CR of that length would give Congress seven additional weeks to work on the regular funding bills. The Senate failed to move the measure. Congress is out the week of September 22. Members of the House aren't expected to return until October 1. This sets up the possibility of a government shutdown if the Senate can't pass the House CR.

PVA PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DISABILITY PANEL ON GROUND TRANSPORTATION

On August 29, Chief Policy Officer, Heather Ansley, was asked to present as part of a panel of experts on accessibility and ground transportation at the quarterly National Council on Disability (NCD) meeting in

Washington, D.C. NCD addresses the concerns of people with disabilities by advising public policy. The panel discussion titled, "Current State of Ground Transportation for People with Mobility Disabilities: Taxis, Rideshares, Paratransit, Microtransit, Shuttles," featured speakers from all over the industry. Discussions included advocating for increased disability access in ground transportation, steps that rideshare companies can take to improve the travel experience, and the future of accessible transit. In July, NCD released a report titled, "[Ground Transportation for People with Mobility Disabilities 2025: Challenges and Progress](#)," which details many transportation issues for wheelchair users in the United States.

PVA SUBMITS COMMENTS ON OFCCP PROPOSAL ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In early September, PVA submitted public comments in opposition to the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs' (OFCCP) proposed rule, "[Modifications to the Regulations Implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended](#)." The rule proposes to eliminate the 7 percent utilization goal for federal contractors to employ people with disabilities and the requirement that contractors invite job applicants to voluntarily self-identify as people with disabilities. Both requirements,

along with an annual analysis and data collection that DOL is also proposing to eliminate, have been integral to Section 503's affirmative action requirements. If implemented, the proposed rule would eliminate several critically important elements of OFCCP's current rule implementing the affirmative action requirements of Section 503, and without these provisions, the rule would become largely ineffective.

[PVA's comments](#) expressed our concern about the proposed rule and urged OFCCP to withdraw them. The comments detailed how the requirements are critically important to ensuring that Section 503 is meaningfully implemented, and they provide certainty for contractors with respect to what they need to do to comply. The comments also discussed how eliminating the requirements would hurt disabled veterans, people with disabilities, contractors and subcontractors alike. Congress has repeatedly recognized the need for federal agencies and contractors to take affirmative actions to ensure equal employment opportunities. PVA will continue to monitor this rulemaking.

SVAC HEARING TO CONSIDER KAREN BRAZELL AS VA UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS

On September 10, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) conducted a hearing to consider the nomination of Karen Brazell for the position of VA Under Secretary for Benefits. Brazell, a United States Army veteran, previously served as the Principle Executive Director and VA Chief Acquisition Officer in the Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction and the Acting Assistant Secretary in the Office of Enterprise Integration. In these roles, she expedited the Community Care Network contracts to expand private-sector care and modernized Veterans Benefits Administration systems to streamline their intake, scheduling, and monitoring.

During her opening statement, Brazell highlighted her and her family's history of service to this nation, both in uniform and in public service. Not only has she served but her husband retired from the Army, her father was a Vietnam veteran, and both her grandfathers served in WWII. She also emphasized her 40-year career in the

military, government, and industry working on improving veterans' access to benefits. During the question-and-answer portion, she repeatedly espoused that she would do all that she could to ensure veterans receive the benefits that they are entitled to. In one line of questioning, she was asked about capping the attorney's fees for those Marines who were exposed to toxins while stationed at Camp Lejeune. She replied, "No veteran should ever have to pay a third party for access to their earned benefits."

The hearing concluded with no timetable for a final vote. You can watch the video of the hearing and read Brazell's submitted testimony [here](#).

DOE FURTHER EXTENDS EFFECTIVE DATE OF DIRECT FINAL RULE

On September 11, the Department of Energy (DOE) [announced](#) another extension of the effective date of the direct final rule titled, "Rescinding Regulations Related to Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs or Activities (General Provisions)." The direct final rule would eliminate critical systems ensuring physical access to facilities receiving DOE funds. DOE announced it is further extending the date to continue considering comments submitted in response to the proposal. The department previously extended the effective date on June 14 due to the receipt of significant adverse comments. The effective date of the direct final rule has been delayed until December 10. PVA submitted comments expressing our concern about the proposed rule and urged DOE to withdraw it. PVA will continue to monitor this issue.

WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND BARRIERS TO WORK

On September 9, the Social Security and Work and Welfare subcommittees of the House Ways and Means Committee held a hearing titled, "Untapped Talent in America: Removing Barriers to Work and Supporting Opportunity for Individuals with Disabilities."

The witnesses shared examples of the complicated nature of navigating benefits and conflicts in accessing benefits that often create unnecessary barriers. While the hearing was billed as “untapped talent in America,” the emerging themes seemed to focus on the general lack of information for most beneficiaries using Social Security programs.

The robust hearing dug into the complications faced by beneficiaries when it comes to utilizing the full scope of benefits available to low-income families and people with disabilities. Discussions included reducing barriers to competitive integrated employment, accessing ABLE accounts, and increasing education about the programs that assist people with disabilities in employment.

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

HOUSE PASSES ANNUAL DEFENSE POLICY BILL

The annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provides authorization of appropriations for the Department of Defense (DOD), nuclear weapons programs of the Department of Energy, and other defense-related activities. In addition to serving as an authorization of appropriations, the NDAA establishes defense policies and restrictions, and addresses organizational administrative matters related to the DOD. Unlike an appropriations bill, this legislation does not provide budget authority for government activities. While the bulk of the bill focuses on defense-related issues, there are usually provisions pertaining to areas where DOD and VA share joint responsibility such as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for separating servicemembers.

On September 10, the House passed its version of the NDAA (H.R. 3838) by a vote of 231 to 196. Voting occurred largely along party lines with four Republicans voting against the measure and 17 Democrats voting for it. The House adopted three amendments that may be of interest to PVA members. First, an amendment by Rep. Jen Kiggans (R-VA) requires DOD to provide timely electronic notices for TRICARE beneficiaries before coverage transitions such as a sudden health change or aging into TRICARE for Life. Another amendment

offered by Chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL), directs several improvements to the TAP program with added accountability and improved pathways for service members and spouses. They are as follows:

- **Requirement of Separation Counseling** – Requires servicemembers to attend at least three days of separation counseling unless they have accepted a job offer or are enrolled in an educational or vocational training program.
- **Waiver for Certain Members of the Reserve Components** – Provides a waiver for certain members of the Reserve, allowing them to attend TAP every three years, unless there is relevant new information.
- **Pilot Program for Military Spouses** – Allows servicemembers to attend TAP multiple times and are encouraged to bring their spouses along, so they can prepare for their next phase in life together.
- **Minimum Amount of Counseling Regarding Financial Planning** – Enhances the financial planning section of TAP to cover topics such as debt management, taxes, and investing.
- **Coordination Between DOD, VA, and DOL** – Improves the warm handover process by fostering a personal connection between the VA, DOD, and the Department of Labor (DOL).
- **Yearly Surprise Audits** – Includes plans for regular audits of the TAP program, updates to the TAP curriculum, and improvements to the website where veterans and their families can find TAP resources.
- **Solid Start Program: Interaction with TAP** – Implements a review of the TAP program when servicemembers are contacted as part of the Solid Start Program, as well as additional reporting requirements to ensure veterans receive the best support for their next mission.

Finally, the third accepted amendment, which was offered by Rep. Tony Gonzales (R-TX), requires the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress on the adequacy of military commissaries and dining facilities. Lawmakers are particularly interested in knowing how

inadequacies with these services impact readiness, morale, and retention.

One amendment of great interest to the military and veteran community that was not considered by the House would have provided concurrent receipt of retirement pay and VA disability compensation to combat-injured servicemembers who were forced to medically retire before reaching 20 years of service. The text of that amendment came directly from the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 2102) which currently has a very high level of support (303 cosponsors) in that chamber.

OMHSP HOLDS VSO MEETING

On September 11, the Offices of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP) held their third quarter veterans organization stakeholder partnership briefing. PVA participated in the meeting. These quarterly briefings provide the VA with an opportunity to share programmatic updates and other information with stakeholders in attendance.

The focus of this meeting was to provide updates on the REACH Vet program and the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) and hold breakout sessions where in-person attendees were able to engage in conversations with the leaders of the OMHSP and other VA staff.

The REACH Vet program (Recovery Engagement and Coordination for Health) was initially launched in 2017 as an innovative way to engage with veterans who are the most at risk of suicide. The Veterans Health Administration developed a targeted prevention program that is triggered by the predictive model which collects data from VA's electronic health record to identify the top 0.1 and 0.2 percent of the top at risk veterans. The REACH Vet program has been impactful, and VA has been able to reach out to many veterans and get them connected to mental health resources.

Another presentation focused on the VCL. The VA shared the most recent data coming from the office. Since the national launch of 988 in July 2022, the VCL has received more than 2.7 million calls, a 46 percent increase in calls per day. Since January 2025, the VCL has received 685,000 calls, chats, and texts, which marks a

15 percent increase. A positive statistic from the VCL is that 97 percent of calls were answered in 20 seconds or less, with an average speed of 9 seconds.

Lastly, we closed out the briefing with an opportunity to share candidly with the directors of the Office of Suicide Prevention and the Office of Mental Health. Both directors were open to suggestions from veterans organizations about the types of briefings that should be added in the future, and they stressed that they are available to organizations should we have any concerns.

NEWS OF NOTE

DOJ Announces Settlement Agreement with Arkansas Division of Correction

On September 5, the Department of Justice (DOJ) [announced](#) that the agency has entered into a [settlement agreement](#) with the Arkansas Division of Correction (ADC) to resolve disability rights violation allegations. Among other things, inmates with mobility disabilities alleged that the facility failed to provide accessible features, regulate water temperature, and provide necessary support or supplies to physically transfer between their wheelchairs and beds, showers, and toilets. The inmates alleged that they suffered physical harm as a result of the violations. The DOJ's investigation concluded that ADC excluded qualified individuals with disabilities from the benefits of receiving adequate medical care.

Under the settlement, ADC must remedy inaccessible elements identified by the U.S. Architectural Accessibility Survey, retain an independent licensed architect, and provide adequate care and treatment for inmates with disabilities. The settlement agreement also includes quality assurances and monitoring and reporting requirements to ensure compliance.

WEBINARS, SURVEYS, & COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Invitation: PVA Holding Access to the Skies Event

PVA and All Wheels Up are working together to reshape the future of accessible air travel – and you're invited.

PVA.org

@ParalyzedVeterans



Paralyzed Veterans of America



@PVA1946



@PVA1946

Join us virtually, or in person if you're in the Seattle area, on Friday, September 26 from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PT. To register, click [here](#). It's free!

PVA Announces ABA Webinar Series

Join us in October, November, and December as the U.S. Access Board presents for PVA members three dynamic webinars exploring accessibility under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA).

- October 15 at 3:00 PM ET learn the essentials of federal facility accessibility, from entrances and signage to restrooms and assembly areas ([register here](#))
- November 20 at 3:00 PM ET dive into practical guidance on making commissaries and recreation facilities accessible for all service members, retirees and their families ([register here](#))
- December 10 at 3:00 PM ET explore inclusive outdoor design standards that open trails, campsites, and beach access to everyone ([register here](#))

Air Travel Survey Opportunity

The research teams at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, Northwestern University, and Indiana University are conducting a research study to explore the air travel experiences of people with mobility disabilities. They want to understand the air travel challenges and things that make air travel participation better to improve airlines and airports. They will conduct focus groups to understand your experiences.

In this study you may be asked to attend one focus group in person or online.

Participants must:

- Be 18 years and older
- Live in the United States
- Self-identify with a physical disability or mobility impairment that requires physical assistance

from another person or from adaptive equipment like a wheelchair, walker, or cane

- Have flown at least twice by air in the last two years
- Communicate in English
- Have access to reliable internet connection to participate in an online focus group through smartphone, personal computer, or another device

If you would like more information about this opportunity, please contact them for screening using this link: [Share Your Experience Flying with a Physical Disability](#).

Veterans' Committee Activities

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



Join PVAction Force to keep up-to-date on legislation that impacts veterans and people with disabilities, and easily communicate with your Senators and Representatives about these issues.



Great Plains Chapter

LADIES AUXILIARY

Purpose

To support the mission of Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter and to foster the continuing education of young adults with disabilities through the McAleer/Pierce Memorial Scholarship program.

Activities

The Auxiliary assists PVA members and staff with planning and preparation of:

- holiday gatherings
- membership dinners
- fundraisers
- awareness & other activities

Questions? Want to Join?

Contact Great Plains PVA
at 402-398-1422!

Fundraising

Wine & Roses, a fundraiser hosted by the Ladies Auxiliary each year, offers guests a selection of wines to taste, specialty desserts prepared by auxiliary members, a silent auction, and roses for the ladies. Proceeds from this event fund the McAleer/Pierce Memorial Scholarship.



McAleer/Pierce Memorial Scholarship

Each year, Auxiliary members review applications from students who have a physical disability or have a parent with a physical disability.

A \$500 scholarship is awarded to the students that are chosen by the scholarship committee. The Auxiliary is proud to have awarded over \$40,000 in scholarship money since the program began in 1988.



Jean McAleer was the founder of the Great Plains PVA Ladies Auxiliary and wife of Great Plains PVA founder, Jay McAleer. Stemming from her passion to help people with disabilities, Jean and the Ladies Auxiliary began a memorial scholarship fund in 1988.

Membership

- Anyone who is interested in helping carry out our mission is welcome to join!
- Auxiliary members are invited and encouraged to be a part of chapter events and activities!
- Members are asked to donate at least 1 item to one of our activities each year.

Fun Fact

Great Plains PVA's Ladies Auxiliary was the first PVA auxiliary. Only 1 other chapter has an auxiliary to this day.



Paralyzed Veterans of America

Great Plains Chapter



Follow us on Social Media!

@greatplainspva



Great Plains PVA, 7612 Maple Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68134-6502

www.greatplainspva.org

402-398-1422



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.