

The Wheeled Herald



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Great Plains Chapter

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**Happy
New Year
2026**

Happy New Year! May this year bring you
all the happiness and warmth you
deserve.

Paralyzed Veterans of America
Great Plains Chapter

President's Message by Randy Squier



The year is off and running. A new year begins with renewed energy. With the holidays behind us, we can now focus on the year ahead. The Chapter events were paused for a while and now we're excited to get back into the swing of things with the bowling, poker and billiards activities that we schedule weekly. There's only so much sitting around you want to do. The social interaction that we all need is welcome. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. We look forward to seeing you all again soon to join us in all the activities planned around the PVA calendar.

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

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MS/Women Veterans Lead

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Upcoming Events

February

12th: BOD Meeting 1:00pm
14th: Valentine's Day
16th: President's Day - Office Closed
19th: Membership Meeting & Lunch 11:00am
28th: Ladies Night

March

2nd: Power Soccer Practices Begin 6-8pm
12th: BOD Meeting 1:00pm
17th: St. Patrick's Day!

April *PVA Awareness Month*

1st: April Fool's Day!
9th: BOD Meeting 1:00pm
21st: Billiards Mini-Tournament at Chapter
22nd-25th: Do Good Days!
25th: MS Walk: Nebraska
28th: Caregiver Night

- » Texas Hold'em games held every Thursday (except BOD meeting days) at the Chapter office at 12pm.
- » Bowling League practices every Wednesday at Mockingbird Lanes at 1pm.



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.

Executive Directors Report

by Mary Bushman

The Great Plains PVA Board of Directors met earlier this month and set four goals for 2026 to guide the chapter in its programs and services for the year. Goals can be new, or they can build on work started in the previous years.

Goal: To increase participation in, and awareness of, programs and services to our Great Plains PVA members living with MS. In 2024, Great Plains was the first PVA chapter to add MS Divisions to its PVA Bowling and Billiards Series tournaments and its Cornhole Clinic & Tournament. This was groundbreaking for PVA and we were proud to offer these opportunities to our Great Plains members living with MS. In 2026, the Chapter will continue to offer MS Divisions in its sports & recreation programs with the continued goal of growing member participation. The Chapter will continue the MS Support Series created in 2025 through collaboration with area medical providers, our PVA National Service Officer, our National PVA MS Chapter Representative, and our chapter staff. We will also continue to feature MS specific information in our chapter newsletter and support the efforts of the National MS Society through active participation in the 2026 Omaha MS Walk.

Goal: To continue to support individuals who care for our Great Plains members & grow our Caregiver Support Series. The chapter recognizes the vital role caregivers play in the health and well-being of our members. In 2026, the Chapter will expand the multi-part Caregiver Series it created in 2025 in collaboration with our PVA National Service Officer, VA staff and chapter staff.

Goal: To grow participation and sponsorship of our PVA Billiards Series Tournament. The Chapter hosted its first PVA Billiards Series tournament in 2024 and welcomed players from across the country. In 2025, the chapter grew participation by 40% and drew in both nationally and world ranked players. In 2026, we will continue to work with National PVA and the National Wheelchair Poolplayers Association to further promote the tournament, increase participation, and work to increase local sponsorship of the tournament.

Goal: To continue efforts to create a welcome video introducing Great Plains PVA to new members and member eligibles. The video will include a tour of the chapter building, information on chapter programs and services, comments from the Chapter NSO, and introductions to chapter members and staff.

Board members and staff are excited to work toward these goals. If any members have questions or would like to offer input in any of the above areas, please reach out to me at bushman@greatplainspva.org.

CHAPTER BIRTHDAYS

February

Dominic Lovison * Neeley Gentry * Teddy Daniels * Dana Hall * Sidney Rightmyer *
Clayborn Barnett * David Seyler * Andrew Nelsen * James Harrin * Jerry Tharp *
Norman Davis

March

Zach Libben * Eric Rudberg * Lindsay Stearns * Chris Holcomb * Richard Kahla *
Michael Brown * William Connor * Michael Warde * Michelle Shupe * Russell Rimovsky *
Randolph Squier * Michael Janik * Charles "Chas" Magdanz * David Hebert * Joseph May * Barbara
Bailey * Marvin McClaughry * Dale Grub * Jerry Sandage * Charles Dus * Robert Roskens

April

Tyrell Johnson * Peter Matson * Timothy Abshire * Clifford Leffingwell * Glenn Fretz *
Michael Ward * David Newburn * John Scott * Thomas Katalenich



UPCOMING EVENTS

2026



FEBRUARY

19th: Membership Meeting & Lunch
11:00am at the chapter
28th: Ladies Night
4:00 - 7:00 PM

MARCH

3rd: Power Soccer Session Begins
Tuesdays, 6-8pm

APRIL

PVA Awareness Month

21st: Billiards Mini Tournament
25th: MS Walk: Nebraska
28th: Caregiver Night
Power Soccer Tuesdays 6-8pm

MAY

2nd: Wine & Roses Fundraiser
5th: Power Soccer Session Ends
11-15th: PVA Convention, Las Vegas

JUNE

7th: Golf Tournament
9-11th: PVA Advocacy Seminar,
Washington DC
25-28th: PVA Bowling Nationals

SEP-DEC

Billiards Tournament
Trunk or Treat
Veterans Day Poster + Poem Contest
Cornhole Clinic/Tournament
Christmas Party

For more information, contact us at vazquez@greatplainspva.org
or visit our website www.greatplainspva.org.

NSO Report

by Destiny Payne, PVA National Service Officer

Nebraska Disabled/Blind Veteran Motor Vehicle Tax & Fee Exemption

Starting January 1, 2026, all disabled and/or blind veterans in Nebraska can receive an exemption for the Motor Vehicle Tax and Motor Vehicle Fee for **ONE** vehicle owned and used for their personal transportation.

The exemption only applies to the Motor Vehicle Tax and Motor Vehicle Fee. All other taxes and fees (e.g. plate fee, sales tax, wheel tax, etc.) still need to be paid. The outlined portion of the example registration below shows the tax that would be exempted.

State of Nebraska - Vehicle Registration		State of Nebraska - Registration Receipt		Tax & Fee Summary	
RACHEL M. GARVER, COUNTY TREASURER LANCASTER CO. - LINCOLN NE 68503		Renew online at: dmv.nebraska.gov/services			
Plate # AAA145	Reg # RS0000020394	Vehicle Details	2019 MV Tax	Motor Vehicle Tax	260.00
Type PASSENGER (2017)	Type NEW REGISTRATION	3N1CN7APXKL877526	\$ 260.00	Motor Vehicle Fee	5.00
Use PASSENGER	Weight	2019 Hyundai SANTA FE	MSRP	Reg Issuance	5.50
	Expires May 2020	4 DOOR	18,000.00	Registration	15.00
Vehicle Details	Reg Date	Title Number	Owners	Plate Fee	6.60
3N1CN7APXKL877526	29-May-2019	N0000037877	JANE DOE	Wheel Tax	74.00
2019 Hyundai SANTA FE			JOHN SMITH	State Sales Tax	935.00
4 DOOR BLUE GASOLINE	Total Paid		Situs Address	Tire Fee	5.00
	\$ 1,323.10		200 A ST	Title Fee	10.00
			LINCOLN NE 68502-1018	Lien Fee	7.00
JANE DOE			2018 Tax District		
JOHN SMITH			1 - TD 1		
200 A ST			Reg Date	Exp Date	
LINCOLN NE 68502-1018			29-May-2019	May 2020	
			RS0000020394	N0000037877	29-May-2019
				Total Paid	1,323.10
An automobile liability policy or proof of financial responsibility is required at the time of registration and while the motor vehicle is operated on a public highway located in Nebraska.		Requests for refunds or credits of fees upon loss of possession or transfer of ownership of the registered motor vehicle must be made within sixty days from the date of the loss or transfer.			

Who qualifies for the tax exemption?

LB650 defines “Disabled Veteran” as meaning the same as 5 U.S. Code § 2108, which outlines two methods to meet the definition of a disabled veteran under U.S. code:

1. An individual who served on active duty in the armed forces, has separated under honorable conditions, and has established the present existence of a service-connected disability (covers those who are rated at 0%), **or**
2. An individual who is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension because of a public statute administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or a military department.

LB650 defines “Blind Veteran” as a veteran whose sight is so defective as to seriously limit such veteran's ability to engage in the ordinary vocations and activities of life. Their disability or blindness must be recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and they must have discharged or otherwise separated with a characterization of honorable.

For eligibility questions, please reach out to Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs at 402-471-2458 or your Nebraska PVA National Service Officer at 402-420-4017.

NSO Report continued...

How does a veteran apply for the tax exemption?

First, the veteran **MUST** be in the **NDVA Military & Veteran Registry** as this is how DMV will verify eligibility. Veterans must include a benefit summary that shows a service-connected disability rating or demonstrates the veteran is in receipt of compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension from the VA.

NOTE: it takes up to 48 hours after approval for registry applications to be processed and visible to DMV. Applications received after 5 p.m. CT on Friday will be processed the following Monday and in the DMV database by Tuesday or Wednesday.

Once in the registry, the veteran needs to do the following when registering or renewing:

In person – tell the county treasurer staff they qualify for the disabled veteran tax exemption.

Via mail – include a note requesting the exemption along with your social security number.

Online – on the second step (Eligibility) check the box that says, "I am eligible for the disabled veteran motor vehicle tax and fee exemption and want to claim it on one of the vehicles I am renewing."

The veteran may need to provide their social security number when registering/renewing if it is not already associated with their registration record.

When does a veteran apply for the tax exemption?

The request for the tax exemption must occur within 30 days after the purchase of a vehicle. For registration renewal, the request must occur prior to the final day of the expiration month. If the request is outside the required timeframe, the veteran will not qualify for the exemption until the next renewal period.

Can the tax exemption be transferred to another vehicle?

Yes. If a veteran wishes to transfer the exemption to a different vehicle, this must be done at the time the vehicle is sold or during the month of expiration of the existing vehicle.

Does a veteran have to apply for the tax exemption every year?

No. The exemption will automatically be applied to future renewals unless the veteran requests it is transferred to another vehicle.

Disabled Veteran Motor Vehicle Tax & Fee Exemption

Receive an exemption for the Motor Vehicle Tax and Fee for one vehicle owned and used for your personal transportation!

State of Nebraska - Vehicle Registration
 RACHEL M. GARVER, COUNTY TREASURER
 LANCASTER CO. - LINCOLN NE 68502

Plate # AAA145
 Type PASSENGER (2017)
 Use PASSENGER

Vehicle Details
 JNFCN7APXKL877526
 2019 Hyundai SANTA FE
 4 DOOR | BLUE | GASOLINE

JANE DOE
 JOHN SMITH
 200 A ST
 LINCOLN NE 68502-1018

Reg # RS0000020394
 Type NEW REGISTRATION
 Weight
 Expires May 2020
 Reg Date 29-May-2019 Title Number N0000037877
 Total Paid \$ 1,323.10

Vehicle Details
 JNFCN7APXKL877526
 2019 Hyundai SANTA FE
 4 DOOR

Owners
 JANE DOE
 JOHN SMITH

Situs Address
 200 A ST
 LINCOLN NE 68502-1018

2018 Tax District
 1 - TD 1

Reg Date 29-May-2016 Exp Date May 2020
 RS0000020394 N0000037877

2019 MV Tax \$ 260.00
 MVRP 16,000.00

Tax & Fee Summary	
Motor Vehicle Tax	260.00
Motor Vehicle Fee	5.00
Reg Insurance	5.50
Registration	15.00
Plate Fee	6.60
Wheel Tax	74.00
State Sales Tax	936.00
Tire Fee	5.00
Title Fee	10.00
Lien Fee	7.00
Total Paid	1,323.10

Renew online at: dmv.nebraska.gov/services

An automobile liability policy or proof of financial responsibility is required at the time of registration and while the motor vehicle is operated on a public highway located in Nebraska.

Requests for refunds or credits of fees upon loss of possession or transfer of ownership of the registered motor vehicle must be made within sixty days from the date of the loss or transfer.



Eligibility requirements, application process, and more information available at veterans.nebraska.gov/vehicletax



VETERANS.NEBRASKA.GOV

402-471-2458

NDVA@NEBRASKA.GOV

@NEVETSAFFAIRS

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Sacrifice.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS





Save the Date for Walk MS 2026!
Walk MS brings together passionate
people nationwide who raise funds
to change the world for those
affected by multiple sclerosis.



Walk MS: Nebraska

Date: Saturday, April 25, 2026

**Location: The Heartland of America Park
Omaha, NE 68102**

Site Opens: 9:00 a.m.

Walk Starts: 10:00 a.m.



Join our team – Great Plains PVA!
Scan the QR code
to donate and register today!



Join Great Plains PVA's Walk MS Team - It's FREE!

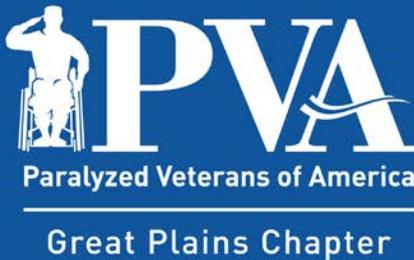
Join Great Plains PVA's Team at Walk MS: Nebraska on Saturday, April 25th! This awareness event is free and gathers a community of supporters committed to helping find a cure for MS.

Great Plains PVA is proud to support its members living with MS by sponsoring this event. Registration is FREE! Come out and join other PVA members by walking or rolling with us. Be sure to stop by our information booth at the Dog Zone during the event, too!

Pictured below: Our team from Walk MS 2025!



Join our team – Great Plains PVA!
Scan the QR code
to donate and register today!



LADIES AUXILIARY'S
MCALEER/PIERCE
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

**Applications
Due March 1st**



For graduating high school seniors who have a permanent physical disability or who have a parent with a permanent physical disability.

Visit www.greatplainspva.org to download an application.

Great Plains PVA Christmas Party

In December, we held our annual Christmas Party at the chapter office for our members, Ladies Auxiliary, staff and their families. We always have a great time coming together to share in the joy that the holidays bring. Ladies Auxiliary President Tammy Squier catered dinner for everyone, which consisted of her famous goulash, a beautiful salad, rolls, and a festive cake for dessert. Thank you, Tammy!

During the evening, chapter staff provided games of Heads or Tails and Bingo, and guests received a small prize or raffle tickets to drop into two large raffles - one for kids and one for adults. At the end of the games, once all the raffle tickets were dropped in boxes, staff pulled winners for about 50 raffle items! It was fun to see the excitement each time someone won a prize.

Extra special this year, we had a Secret Santa that donated \$200 to be given out as door prizes in the amount of \$50 each. So 4 people went home with an extra \$50 in cash! Thank you, Secret Santa!

In addition to the camaraderie and friendship, this event provided lots of opportunities to win and go home with something special. We loved the chance to help make that happen.





2026 **POLICY PRIORITIES**



[#PushingAccessForward](#)

2026 POLICY PRIORITIES



For 80 years, PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA—the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely to the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or diseases (SCI/D), like MS and ALS—has led the fight for accessibility and provided a full circle of support from the point of injury or diagnosis through all of life’s milestones. With offices inside all 25 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) SCI/D centers, PVA is unmatched. Staffed

with licensed architects, medical professionals, legal experts, and leaders in research and education, PVA fights to help veterans with SCI/D receive the benefits they earned, the specialized health care they deserve, the accessible homes and vehicles they need, and the meaningful careers they want. PVA also advocates for disabled veterans with the greatest support needs to have access to the same opportunities and freedoms available to all Americans.

To review PVA’s policy priorities in depth, please visit PVA.org/PolicyPriorities.



Strengthen the Foundations of VA’s Specialized Health Care Services

- **Veterans with SCI/D choose VA for their care because it is unmatched in the community.** Sending catastrophically disabled veterans to the community for specialty care services, rather than providing it in the VA, decreases the quality of their care.
- **VA’s SCI/D system of care is a national system of care.** Veterans from different states often depend throughout their lives on the services of their SCI/D center (hub) site. Sites at VA facilities closer to home (spokes) give veterans options while ensuring access to the full support of this crucial care system.
- **Chronic staffing deficiencies continue to have a direct, adverse impact on VA specialty care.** The SCI/D system of care faces clinical vacancies and suffers from inefficient hiring practices.
- **Infrastructure deficiencies also compromise veterans’ care.** VA’s SCI/D system of care is comprised of 25 acute care centers and seven long-term care centers. Many of the older centers have only had cosmetic or basic renovations.

▶ Recommendations

- Implement a holistic assessment of the SCI/D system of care and ensure individual centers are properly supported to meet SCI/D veterans’ needs.
- Address chronic staffing deficiencies in VA specialized services, including the SCI/D system of care.
- Prioritize facility infrastructure and leasing projects that support the unique services the VA provides, such as SCI/D care, that are not readily available in the community.
- Provide sufficient funding to fully support VA specialized services, like SCI/D care, through proper staffing and infrastructure.



PVA firmly believes VA is the best health care provider for disabled veterans, particularly those with catastrophic disabilities. More importantly, our members consistently choose VA.”

Testimony of PVA National President Robert Thomas on September 17, 2025, before the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee.



2026 POLICY PRIORITIES

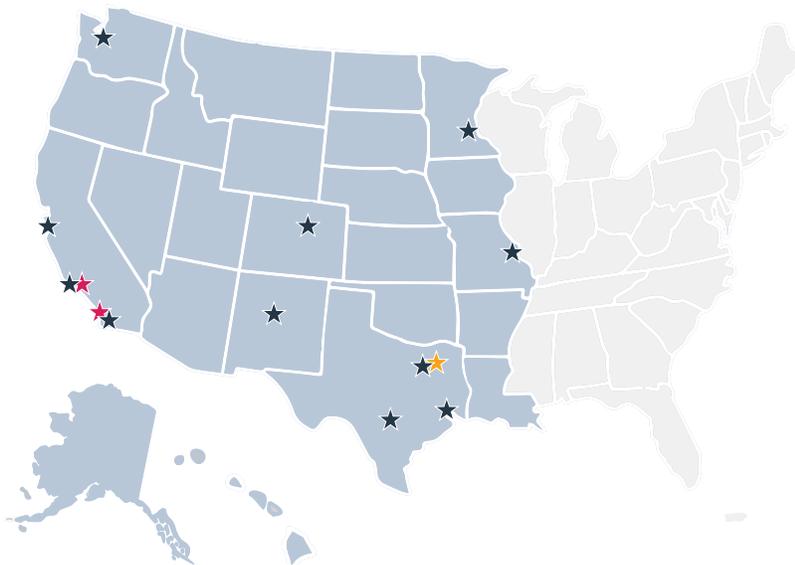


Maximize VA Long-Term Services and Supports for Veterans with SCI/D

- **Veterans with SCI/D often need long-term services and supports**, whether in their homes or through facility-based care, throughout their lives.
- **Inadequate nursing care for SCI/D veterans in community institutions often leads to a lower quality of care, poorer outcomes, and increased costs for VA.** Many community facilities will not accept veterans with intensive needs, such as those who are ventilator dependent or require regular assistance with bowel and bladder functions.
- **Disabled veterans with the greatest support needs must also have improved access to VA-provided home and community based-services**, such as those available through the Veteran Directed Care (VDC) program.
- **The VA's Bowel and Bladder program is a life-sustaining program providing support to veterans with SCI/D, but it is fraught with challenges for caregivers and is unevenly applied across the VA.** Timely reimbursement and the tax treatment of payments are the chief complaints, as well as a lack of due process in its administration.
- **VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) unnecessarily restricts even some paralyzed veterans from being found eligible for this program.** These caregivers, as well as unpaid caregivers, are unable to receive Social Security credits for retirement.

▶ Recommendations

- Prioritize infrastructure and leasing projects focused on increasing specialized VA long-term care facilities for veterans with SCI/D.
- Monitor the implementation of the provisions in the Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act of 2025 (P.L. 118-210) that expand access to VA's home and community-based services to ensure that services, including the VDC program, are available to all catastrophically disabled veterans, regardless of where they live.
- Codify VA's Bowel and Bladder program to correct existing reimbursement problems and ensure equitable treatment of payments for veterans' caregivers.
- Reform VA's PCAFC to reduce unnecessary restrictions on access to family caregiver supports for veterans with catastrophic disabilities.
- Support credits under Social Security to ensure that caregivers are not penalized in retirement for taking time out of the workforce to perform caregiving duties.



- ★ SCI/D Acute Care Centers
- ★ SCI/D Long-term Care Facilities
- ★ SCI/D Long-term Care Facilities in Development

2026 POLICY PRIORITIES



Fortify the Financial Security of Veterans with SCI/D, their Families, and Survivors

VA Disability Compensation

- **VA Disability Compensation is a crucial, earned benefit for veterans who are injured or become ill** due to their service.
- **Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) is an additional benefit that can be paid to veterans due to special circumstances**, such as the need for aid and attendance by another person, or a specific disability, such as loss of use of one hand or leg.
- **SMC is designed to compensate for non-economic factors**, including the severe nature of the disability, social inadaptability, or inconvenience. It is not meant to compensate for the economic effects of a service-connected disability.
- **Baseline rates for SMC have not been re-examined for years** and are not meeting the cost of living with a catastrophic disability.



Special Monthly Compensation is intended to assist veterans with the higher costs of living that disabled veterans experience. But its baseline rates haven't been raised for decades, so it isn't helping veterans as much as it did when it was established."

Testimony of PVA National Treasurer Tom Wheaton on December 3, 2025, before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

▶ Recommendations

- Ensure that the core foundations of the VA Disability Compensation program are preserved, and that Congress and the VA take meaningful actions to eliminate inefficiencies affecting veterans, their families, and survivors.
- Support increasing SMC rates for veterans with catastrophic injuries and illnesses.



Employment

- **Veterans with catastrophic disabilities face significant challenges in finding and obtaining employment** that meets their needs.
- **High caseloads within the VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program limit the amount of time counselors can spend with individual veteran clients**, particularly those with significant barriers to employment.
- **Disabled veterans using the VR&E program do not receive the same subsistence rate as Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients.**

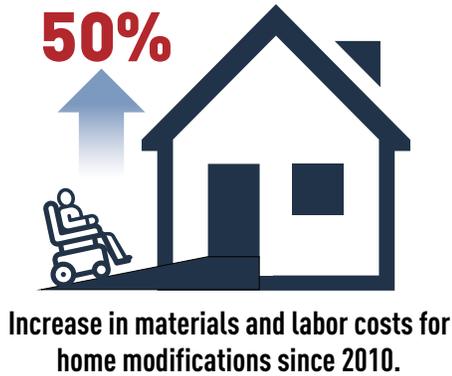
▶ Recommendations

- Oppose efforts to weaken disability-related protections for and incentives to hire disabled veterans.
- Prioritize filling VR&E staffing vacancies to ensure veterans with catastrophic injuries and illnesses receive the time and attention needed to address their complex disabilities and help them return to work.
- Reform VR&E to remove inefficient processes and ensure that benefits targeted to disabled veterans are not less than those available in VA's education programs.

2026 POLICY PRIORITIES

Accessible Housing

- **Affordable, accessible housing is in short supply, for people with disability** including disabled veterans.
- **VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grants help veterans and service members make medically necessary improvements and structural alterations** to their primary residence.
- **The HISA grant ceiling has not been raised in over a decade**, yet the cost of home modifications has significantly increased over the same period.



▶ Recommendations

- Enhance the availability of accessible housing by increasing tax incentives for home modifications and building accessible units.
- Support increasing HISA grant amounts to match the present cost of typical housing renovations and tie them to a construction cost index for future years to ensure the benefit serves its intended purpose.

VA Survivor Benefits

- **VA provides Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to qualified survivors of service members and veterans.**
- **DIC rates have only been minimally adjusted since 1993.** These payments are approximately 41 percent of compensation for a 100 percent service-disabled veteran with a spouse. In contrast, monthly benefits for the survivors of federal civil service retirees are calculated as a percentage of the civil service retiree's Federal Employees Retirement System or Civil Service Retirement System benefits, up to 55 percent.
- **Rarely do survivors of veterans with ALS qualify for the additional "DIC kicker,"** available to survivors based on how long the veteran lives with a totally disabling disability, due to the quick progression of the disease.

▶ Recommendations

- Support indexing the rate of compensation for DIC payments to 55 percent of a 100 percent service-disabled veteran with a spouse to achieve parity with federal employees' survivors.
- Support providing eligible survivors of veterans who died of service-connected ALS with the DIC kicker.

DIC kicker eligibility requirement

8 years

Average life expectancy of person with ALS

3-5 YEARS

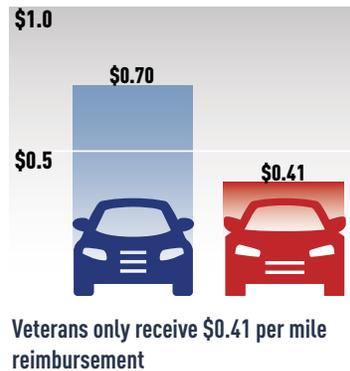
2026 POLICY PRIORITIES



Increase SCI/D Veterans' Access to Health Care Services

Accessible Transportation

- **Transportation is often one of the biggest barriers to health care for veterans with SCI/D.** Missed health care appointments result in worse health outcomes and higher costs.
- **VA's Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) program provides necessary vehicle adaptations,** but changes have made it more bureaucratic.
- **VA's travel mileage reimbursement rate has remained stagnant,** even while gas prices and other costs like insurance and maintenance have increased.



Recommendations

- Improve travel options for catastrophically disabled veterans, particularly those who use wheelchairs, live outside urban areas, and need help traveling to medical care appointments.
- Streamline the AAE program by eliminating hurdles that make it more difficult for veterans to purchase and access vehicles that meet their needs.
- Increase the reimbursement rate for veterans' travel expenses to improve their access to health care services and reduce their financial burden.

Growing Disabled Veterans' Families

- **Thousands of service members have suffered injuries, illnesses, or encountered exposures that affect a veteran's ability to procreate.**
- **Women veterans are 50 percent more likely to suffer from infertility** than the general population.

Recommendations

- Protect and support increased access to health care services, including IVF, that help disabled veterans grow their families.
- Direct research to improve VA's ability to meet the long-term reproductive health care needs of veterans whose SCI/D affects their ability to reproduce.

Women Veterans with SCI/D

- **More women veterans than ever are using VA health care.** Women veterans with SCI/D are a small but significant subset of these users.
- **Women veterans, including those with SCI/D, need access to comprehensive gender-specific mental and physical health care** with high standards of care regarding the quality, privacy, safety, and dignity of that care.

Recommendations

- Improve access to services and benefits for veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma.
- Designate women veterans' primary care services and gender-sensitive mental health care as essential, foundational services at every facility and provide training to community care providers.
- Ensure that all VA and community care clinicians who provide services for women veterans adhere to VA's evidence-based clinical practice guidelines.

2026 POLICY PRIORITIES



Ensure Equal Opportunity and Full Participation for Catastrophically Disabled Veterans

Disability Access

- **Despite the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), access barriers remain, unfairly limiting opportunities for veterans with disabilities,** including those who use wheelchairs.
- **Unfortunately, complaints filed with the Department of Justice are routinely dismissed without any action due to the number received.** Despite a private right of action, lawyers are often hard to secure as there are no monetary damages for suits against public accommodations under the ADA.

Surface Transportation

- **Despite the ADA and other disability rights laws,** access to transportation continues to be fragmented.
- **People with disabilities, particularly those who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices for mobility, routinely encounter disability-related barriers in accessing transportation.**
- **Problems range from broken sidewalks to a lack of accessible taxis and rideshare vehicles, as well as an inability to safely and efficiently access rail and subway stations** due to a lack of elevators or level boarding.



**Top access barrier for PVA members?
Broken or missing sidewalks, curb cuts,
and crosswalks.**

▶ Recommendations

- Support increasing tax incentives that help businesses with ADA compliance and increase funding for the DOJ review of ADA complaints.
- Oppose efforts to impose requirements that would decrease proactive compliance by giving businesses an opportunity to “cure” the violation prior to a lawsuit or hinder adoption of regulatory requirements that promote equal opportunity and full participation.

▶ Recommendations

- Include proposals in the next surface transportation reauthorization that will provide needed funding to help remove barriers to transportation for people with disabilities, including fixing barriers that prevent access to sidewalks, curb cuts, and crosswalks.
- Support efforts that increase accessible transportation options for wheelchair users, such as wheelchair accessible rideshare and autonomous vehicles.

2026 POLICY PRIORITIES

Ensure Equal Opportunity and Full Participation for Catastrophically Disabled Veterans, continued

Air Travel

- **Veterans with SCI/D must endure inaccessible security screening processes and are often injured in the aircraft boarding and deplaning process** and/or their assistive devices are delayed, damaged, or even destroyed.
- **The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (P.L. 118-63) recognized the need to improve the safety and dignity of passengers with disabilities** through new training requirements, an improved complaint process, and research focused on improving air travel for wheelchair users.
- **In 2024, the Department of Transportation finalized Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) regulations protecting the safety and dignity of passengers with disabilities who use wheelchairs and scooters in air travel.** Now, some of those protections are in danger of being rolled back.
- **ACAA protections are only enforceable through discretionary administrative actions.**

▶ Recommendations

- Improve airport security screening processes and training to facilitate an efficient and dignified experience.
- Conduct effective oversight of implementation of FAA Reauthorization Act requirements focused on improving disability access in air travel.
- Oppose efforts to rollback regulatory requirements for wheelchair users in air travel.
- Support improved enforcement of ACAA requirements to protect the health and safety of passengers with disabilities.



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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.