

The Wheeled Herald



Published by the Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter

Omaha, Nebraska

Jun-Jul 2026

**Inside This
Issue**

President's Report

Mission of Mercy
Dental Event

Billiards Tournament

ED Report

Bowling Nationals

NSO Report

Chapter Birthdays

NSO Veterans & Fam-
ily Caregivers Dinner

Ladies Auxiliary
Awards 5 Scholarships

Golf Tournament

Upcoming Events



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

Great Plains PVA Hosts 24th Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser

On June 7th, 212 golfers and over 30 volunteers joined Great Plains PVA staff and members at Tiburon Golf Club in Omaha for our 24th annual Tee Off & Support Wheelchair Sports Golf Tournament. Golfers tee'd off at 9am playing 18 holes of golf, participating in different contests along the course, and culminating in a meal and program, which included live and silent auctions, raffles, drawings, and prizes. The day was filled with laughter and great memories, many of which were captured by our volunteer photographer, Don Labrie. (Enjoy his photos below and on page 10!) It was a momentous event that raised over \$95,000 for our chapter's programs and services.

The success of this fundraiser is the result of the dedication and incredible efforts of our golf committee, led by Dan Dolezal. These gentlemen devote 6 months of planning to help create a fun and successful event that keeps golfers coming back, and sponsors continually donating, year after year. We are incredibly grateful for their support and endless efforts to support our organization through this tournament.



Pictured left to right, Back row: Mat Nisotis, Jim Thompson, Justin Cox, Russell Falconer, & Dan Dolezal; Front row: Barry Ridout, Tim Fowler

President's Message *by Randy Squier*



Summertime. Summertime heat, summertime fun, summertime is almost done. Activity at the chapter has slowed somewhat but the goal to continue growing participation with our PVA members and disabled friends in the community never stops.

Our June golf tournament was deemed very successful by all. Our bowling tournament in late June was also very successful and stands out as PVA's National event. Our billiards tournament is next on the list in mid September. Get your pool stick out, sharpen your skills, and join us for this fun event!

In August, a face-to-face and light meal is planned at the chapter building with our National Service Officers, Mike Sheets and Destiny Payne. Be sure to register for the event and add it to your calendar to attend and ask your questions directly. A broad list of topics will be discussed.

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
Destiny Payne
402-420-4017
MikeS@pva.org
DestinyP@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

As the summer winds down, here's hoping you enjoyed the summer sun and heat, because here in the Midwest, it is always changing.

Billiards practice will begin soon at Big John's Billiards here in Omaha to get ready for the tournament.

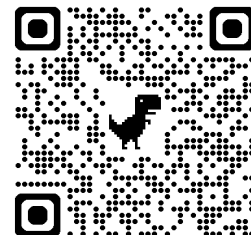
Our bowling league at Mockingbird Lanes continues to grow on Wednesday afternoons at 1 PM.

Our poker games are ongoing, Thursdays at noon - come and join us. Participation is the key to keeping you motivated and focused on staying in the game. Although my game has slowed, I'm still participating. Come and have some fun with us if you're able.

Veterans Mission of Mercy Dental Event



Spots are still available for both patients and volunteers at the upcoming Veterans Mission of Mercy Dental Event! This year's Dental Event will be held August 28-29, with a set-up day on August 27. The event will be located at the Army National Guard Titan Readiness Center in Yutan. Only a few appointment spots are left, so register today! More information, including registration, is available using the QR code to the right.





**PVA Billiards Series
3rd Annual Great Plains PVA
9-Ball Tournament**

**September 11-12, 2026
Big John's Billiards
9819 M St. Omaha, NE**



Great Plains Chapter



**Friday
September 11th**

**9:30 Registration
10:00 Players Meeting
10:30 Play starts
12:30 Lunch provided
1:30 Play continues
Skills Competition
50/50 & Silent Auction**

**Saturday
September 12th**

**10:00 Play Starts
12:30 PVA Billiards Series Yr-End
Awards Luncheon provided
1:30 Play continues
50/50 & Silent Auction**



\$10,700 Prize Fund

	Wheelchair Division (Based on 16 players)*	MS Division (Based on 16 players)*
Main Flight:		
1st	\$850 + Cue & Plaque	\$850 + Cue & Plaque
2nd	700 + Plaque	700 + Plaque
3rd	600 + Plaque	600 + Plaque
4th	500	500
5th	400	400
6th	400	400
Second Flight:		
1st	\$400 + Cue & Plaque	\$400 + Cue & Plaque
2nd	350 + Plaque	350 + Plaque
3rd	300 + Plaque	300 + Plaque
4th	200	200
5th	150	150
6th	150	150
7th	100	100
8th	100	100
9th	75	75
10th	75	75

* Prize fund is adjusted down with fewer players.

Progressive Play:

Race to 5 in Preliminary Rounds
Race to 7 in Semi-Finals
Race to 9 in Finals

**Plus: Skills Competition
Daily Lunches
Goody Bags
Free Drawings**

**\$80 Registration Fee
REGISTER HERE**



For questions contact:
bushman@greatplainspva.org

Executive Directors Report

by Mary Bushman

Dear Members,

This past June, the Chapter hosted its third PVA Bowling Series National Tournament. The event welcomed 36 wheelchair and MS bowlers for 4 days of very competitive bowling. Bowlers came from 15 states coast to coast and included novice and competitive bowlers. Bowlers new to the sport received some excellent encouragement and seasoned bowlers had the opportunity to compete against some of our country's very best wheelchair bowlers.

Our Chapter's league bowlers definitely held their own throughout the tournament and dominated in the 3-person team competition. PVA member Seth Kotouc was on the 1st place team. The team of Shayna Goerdt, Randy Squier and Mark Linquist took 2nd place. The team of Chris Parnell, Will Leavitt and Dave Nelson took 3rd place, and John Scott was on the 4th place team. Teams led by Chris Parnell, Randy Squier, Will Leavitt and Dave Nelson placed in the top five at the Friday night Up/Down tournament. Congratulations to Chis Parnell and Dave Nelson for placing 4th and 5th in the 4-day Singles Scratch Division. Congratulations to Will Leavitt for his 5th place finish and to John Scott for his 9th place finish in the Handicap A Division. Great Plains PVA bowlers placed heavy in the Handicap B Division with the following titles earned: Seth Kotouc – 2nd; Lisa Mann – 4th; James Beversdorf – 5th; Gary Standley – 7th; Randy Squier – 8th; and Bailor Henderson-Bryant – 10th. Congratulations to Great Plains PVA member Bill Connor for placing 1st in the MS Division! PVA members Shayna Goerdt (defending champion) and Lanna Vestal placed 3rd and 4th in the MS Division. Congratulations to everyone!

It was a very special moment when we presented the 2026 Mike Moore Spirit of the Games award to PVA league bowler Bailor Henderson-Bryant. Bailor is a member of the Chapter's Power Soccer team and joined the bowling league this past year. Bailor is a ramp bowler, and this was his first tournament. His spirit and enthusiasm were so apparent, his fellow bowlers voted for him to receive this prestigious award.

A special thank you to our scorekeeper Terry Nelson for another year of keeping everything in order throughout the tournament. Thank you also to Lori, Amanda, and AJ Scott for once again managing the 4-day 50/50 raffle and breaking their previous year's record sales! Thank you to Rosie Pringle, the staff at Mockingbird Lanes, The Bowling Store, and all the other volunteers who made the tournament and the Friday night Up/Down event possible!

Save the dates of June 24-27, 2027 for next year's event when we celebrate our 10th Anniversary of hosting tournaments on the PVA Bowling Series! Come celebrate with us as a bowler, sponsor, volunteer or spectator!



PVA Bowling Series Nationals Hosted by Great Plains PVA



NSO Report

by Destiny Payne, PVA National Service Officer

Understanding Driver Rehabilitation, Automobile Allowance, Adaptive Equipment, and Vehicle Modifications

The VA Driver Rehabilitation Program helps veterans develop or regain the skills needed for safe driving or transportation. Whether you plan to drive independently or need transportation solutions as a passenger, VA Driver Rehabilitation helps determine the safest transportation options and identify any adaptive equipment or vehicle modifications needed to maximize independence and safety.

Services may include:

- Comprehensive clinical evaluations by VA Occupational Therapy Driver Rehabilitation Specialists.
- Assessment of cognitive, visual, and physical abilities related to driving.
- Training with adaptive equipment such as hand controls, left-foot accelerators, steering devices, and other specialized equipment.
- Recommendations for adaptive equipment and vehicle modifications tailored to your functional abilities.
- Behind-the-wheel evaluations and training, when appropriate.

Where is Driver Rehabilitation Offered?

For Great Plains Chapter members, Driver Rehabilitation services are available through VA Central Iowa Health Care System in Des Moines, IA.

Veterans who plan to drive must first complete a comprehensive in-person Driver Rehabilitation evaluation. During this clinical assessment, the Driver Rehabilitation Specialist evaluates cognitive, visual, and physical abilities to determine driving readiness and identify any adaptive equipment or vehicle modifications that may be required.

When clinically appropriate, veterans will also complete a behind-the-wheel driving evaluation. This is considered the gold standard for determining safe driving ability. If a veteran is unable to safely complete the behind-the-wheel evaluation or cannot safely transfer into the evaluation vehicle, the clinical assessment can still be used to recommend appropriate adaptive equipment or vehicle modifications when clinically appropriate.

Passenger-only evaluations and training are also available virtually through VA Video Connect (VVC), making these services more accessible for veterans who do not plan to drive independently.

You can also request Driver Rehabilitation during your in-person annual evaluation at a VA Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders (SCI/D) Center. This provides a convenient opportunity for veterans already traveling for their annual SCI care.

Automobile Allowance & Adaptive Equipment

Veterans with certain qualifying service-connected disabilities that meet VA eligibility requirements may be eligible for the VA Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment benefit.

Veterans who do not qualify for the VA Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment benefit may still receive certain non-operational adaptive equipment or modifications through VA health care when medically necessary and recommended by the Driver Rehabilitation team.

IMPORTANT: Do **not** purchase adaptive equipment or vehicle modifications before receiving VA approval.

Prior authorization is required for VA to pay for or reimburse the cost of adaptive equipment, vehicle modifications, or Automobile Allowance-related purchases.

Getting Started

There is no separate application for Driver Rehabilitation. The process begins with a referral from your VA primary care provider or specialty care team. You must have prior authorization before purchasing.

- 1. Talk to Your VA Primary Care Provider** – Discuss your mobility needs and interest in Driver Rehabilitation, adaptive driving, or vehicle modifications.
- 2. Obtain a Referral** – Your provider will submit a consult to VA Occupational Therapy Driver Rehabilitation.
- 3. Complete Your Evaluation** – The Driver Rehabilitation team will assess your cognitive, visual, and physical abilities to determine whether adaptive equipment or vehicle modifications are appropriate. When indicated, they may provide behind-the-wheel evaluation and training and assist with documentation required for adaptive equipment and vehicle modifications.

We're Here to Help

Your Paralyzed Veterans of America National Service Officers are here to help every step of the way. Whether you have questions about Driver Rehabilitation, adaptive equipment, vehicle modifications, or VA Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment Benefit, we're here to help you understand your options and navigate the process.

Contact your local PVA office to get started.

Coming Next

- **Next Issue:** Understanding the VA Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment benefit: Eligibility requirements, application tips, and common mistakes to avoid.

CHAPTER BIRTHDAYS

August

Christopher Speer * Randy McIntosh * Melanie Danhauer * Joseph Mumm *
Camile Hopkins-Bailey * Troy Peck * Lorie Hinkel * Joseph Ruhnke * Todd Annett *
Randy Conell * Carla Marciniak * Randy Tubbs * Larry Kelly * Langston Farrish * Richard Peters

September

Diana Schnabel * Jabari Wright * William Leavitt * Christopher Parnell * James Neal * Carl Schaffner *
Charles Howard * Larry Dawson * John Speck * Gale Hendricksen * John McDonald

October

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



Paralyzed Veterans of America

Great Plains Chapter

PVA National Service Officers invite you to dine with them!

**FOR VETERANS &
FAMILY CAREGIVERS -**

**JOIN PVA EXPERTS TO LEARN
ABOUT AVAILABLE VA BENEFITS.**

**COMPLIMENTARY DINNER FOR
ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES.**

**AUGUST 19, 2026
6 PM - 8 PM**



MIKE SHEETS

EASTERN REGION DIRECTOR



DESTINY PAYNE

NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER

LOCATION

**GREAT PLAINS PVA OFFICE
7612 MAPLE STREET, OMAHA**

***JOIN BY ZOOM FOR THE PRESENTATION**

**REGISTER
HERE!**

RSVP BY AUGUST 15TH!



SEMINAR BENEFITS

→ **EXPERT INSIGHTS & KNOWLEDGE ON:**

- AID & ATTENDANCE
- VETERAN DIRECTED CARE
- EMERGENCY CARE
- FAQs

→ **GIFTS FOR CAREGIVERS!
DOOR PRIZES!**

DON'T MISS OUT! REGISTER TODAY!  WWW.GREATPLAINSPVA.ORG  **7612 MAPLE ST, OMAHA, NE 68134**

Ladies Auxiliary Awards 5 Scholarships

by Peggy Moore, Secretary

The Ladies Auxiliary has been busy with several projects. Part of the mission of the Auxiliary is to administer the McAleer/Pierce Scholarship. This year we are proud to announce scholarships were awarded to five high school seniors who applied and met our criteria.

Abigail Saunders graduated from Centennial Public High School in her hometown of Waco, NE. She was active in the Art Club and Choir. Abigail was a member of the National Honor Society and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. She will attend Concordia University, Nebraska, majoring in Art Education.

Seren Esser went to Lourdes Catholic High School in Nebraska City. She was also a member of the National Honor Society and lettered in Track and Volleyball. Seren served as Junior Class Vice-President. She will pursue a degree in nuclear medicine technology.

Trevor Roesler lives in Lincoln, but attended high school at Waverly High School. He made the Varsity Baseball team three years running and played Senior Legion Baseball during those summers. He also held jobs during each summer. Trevor will attend Southwestern Community College in Creston, IA where he hopes to gain a degree in Construction Technology.

Mackenzie Stearns lives in Emerson Iowa and attended East Mills High School. She was active in sports, including Cross-Country, Basketball, Track and Softball. Mackenzie was a member of the National Honor Society and several school clubs/associations. She has been accepted to Iowa State University and will major in animal science and minor in genetics.

Electa Restau will attend the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, majoring in Marketing. She intends to join FCCLA (Family, Career, & Community Leaders of America) while in college.

Electa holds down two jobs and has been in band during her junior and senior high school years. She was a member of FCCLA for five years, winning a gold medal at a national competition in Florida. Electa went to Milford Jr/Sr High School.

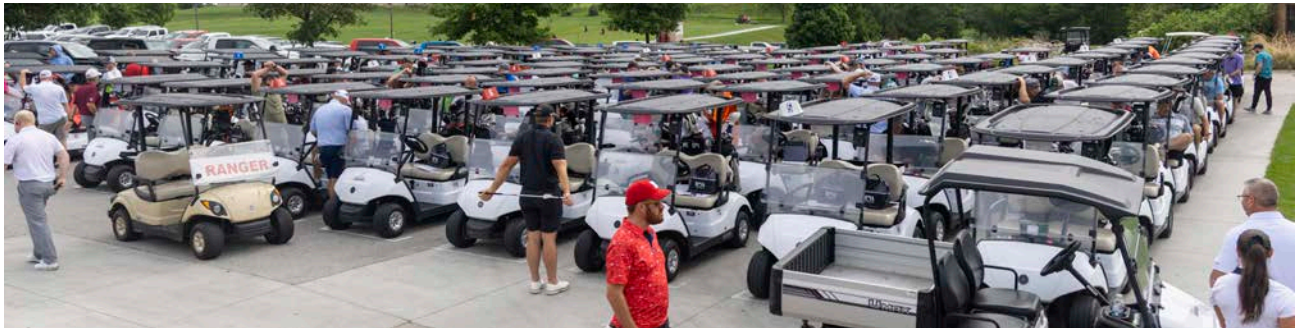


Our President Tammy Squier was invited to present the scholarship and check to Mackenzie at her school's award night.

This year we held our Wine and Roses event at the PVA on Saturday, May 2nd. In addition to sampling various types of wine, we offered heavy hors d'oeuvres and desserts. In addition to food and drink, members and guests played Music Bingo presented by The Music Bingo Group. We included a bountiful silent auction with the festivities. This is the Auxiliary's only fundraiser of the year. Profits from this fun night fund the scholarships.

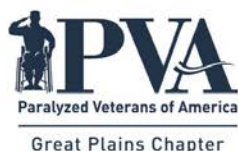
We hope to see many of you next year.

Great Plains PVA 24th Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser Pictures





POWERED BY



**PRACTICE:
TUESDAYS 6-8PM**

AT GREAT PLAINS PVA · 76TH & MAPLE



**FALL SESSION
AUG 25-OCT 20**

(no practice Sept 8)

\$40 REGISTRATION FEE
*SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

.....
For power wheelchair
users - kids and adults -
who want to participate in
a competitive team sport!

**REGISTER
TODAY!**



Could GLP-1 Medications Offer Additional Benefits for People Living with MS?

by Shayna Goerd, MS/Women Veterans POC

One of the more interesting studies presented at the 2026 Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) Annual Meeting explored whether GLP-1 medications may offer benefits beyond weight loss for people living with multiple sclerosis.

GLP-1 receptor agonists, including medications such as semaglutide and tirzepatide, have become well known for helping people manage diabetes and obesity. Researchers are now beginning to explore whether these medications may also have a positive impact on symptoms and quality of life for people living with MS. In this study, researchers looked at 70 people with MS who had been taking a GLP-1 medication for approximately seven months. Participants reported significantly higher levels of physical activity after starting treatment, with weekly moderate-to-vigorous activity nearly doubling during the study period.

Researchers also observed improvements in several patient-reported symptoms, including anxiety, pain, spasticity, bowel and bladder concerns, dizziness, sensory symptoms, and vision-related issues.

As encouraging as these findings are, it's important to remember that this was a relatively small study and more research is needed. Not every symptom improved. Researchers did not find significant changes in fatigue, cognition, hand function, walking ability, or depression.

Still, the study highlights something many of us in the MS community already know: overall health matters. When people feel better, move more, and have access to tools that support their health, it can create a positive ripple effect throughout their lives.

For veterans living with MS, these findings are worth watching. While GLP-1 medications are not approved to treat MS itself, future research may help us better understand how weight management, inflammation, physical activity, and metabolic health influence life with MS.

As always, treatment decisions should be made in partnership with your healthcare team. But studies like this remind us that advances in one area of medicine may sometimes create unexpected opportunities in another.

Great Plains PVA Events

Upcoming Events



2026

Fall/Winter

AUG
25

Omaha Power Soccer Club

Fall Session begins and ends on October 20th at Great Plains PVA

SEP
11-12

PVA Billiards Series Tournament

At Big John's Billiards, Omaha

OCT
1

PVA Poster + Poem Contest

for students in 1st-8th grades/ Submissions due Oct 30th.

OCT
24

Trunk or Treat

A Halloween trick-or-treat event for families with special needs

NOV
11

Veterans Day

Poster + Poem winners announced

NOV
14

Cornhole Clinic/Tournament

at Great Plains PVA

DEC
4

Chapter Christmas Party

at Great Plains PVA

→ GREATPLAINSPVA.ORG

402-398-1422

@GREATPLAINSPVA

2026 PVAFit Individual Competition

We just finished our 13th annual in-house individual competition! Our first was held in 2014 and while our participants have changed, our equipment has improved and our movements have evolved, the spirit of competition remains unchanged. We've had 5 overall winners over those 13 competitions, with Bruce Froendt winning the first in 2014. Nancy Berg won in 2018 and Ethan Eckelbarger won in 2023. Daniel Schmitt has taken the title twice (2019 and 2025) but our most prolific athlete has been Travis Hasenkamp. Travis won this year (by a sizeable 90 points) and also took home the gold in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2021, 2022 and 2024.

This year was 9 scored events spread out over 6 weeks. Travis won 3 of those but Daniel, Ethan and Bruce all won 2 events each. Travis scored 843 points, Daniel was 2nd with 733 and Tim Hobbs rounded out the podium with 714. If you're interested in watching any of these workouts, they are all up on our YouTube channel (Great Plains PVA Adaptive Fitness). Just search "2026 Individual Event" on our channel and a list will be populated for you.

June Challenge Results

This workout was 8-intervals of the sled, rower and dumbbell clean and jerks. It had an annoying caveat though – Your score was only your slowest round. So if you burned it down 7 times, but fell off considerably once, that disappointing round was your score. It was not only a test of fitness but of knowing your abilities. Matt Ross took home the victory on this one, his first Challenge win here at the PVA! Below is the leaderboard of our June Challenge:

- 1) Matt Ross – 1:59
- 2) Travis Hasenkamp – 2:09
- 3) Daniel Schmitt – 2:14
- 4) Tim Hobbs – 2:19
- 5) Chris Parnell – 2:36
- 6) Barry Ridout – 2:48
- 7) Bruce Froendt – 3:25

July Challenge Announcement

The athletes will start with a buy-in on the SkiErg (should take around 4-minutes) Then the athletes will complete 5 rounds of dips and shoulder-to-overhead. There's nothing cute about this one, just grind through work while avoiding triceps shutdown. Easier said than done...

2026 Wheelchair Softball World Series is in Nebraska!

This year's World Series will be held at the First Interstate SportsPlex in Valley, Nebraska on August 13th-15th. This is a really fun spectator event and I plan on being out there as much as possible. Several of team Nebraska's players train(ed) here at the PVA and it's always cool to see fitness being applied outside of the weight room.

I have not been out to the SportsPlex in a few years, but last time I was there was not much shade. It's going to be hot, so if you plan on coming out maybe bring some sort of shade. I will update Team Nebraska's tournament schedule on our Facebook page (Great Plains PVA Fitness) the best I can, hope to see all of you out there.



Washington Update

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

CONTROVERSIAL VETERANS PACKAGE STALLS

The Take Care of America's Veterans Act (H.R. 9237), which consolidated 62 separate veterans-related bills into a single piece of legislation, was scheduled for floor consideration on July 16. As a reminder, this legislation includes PVA priorities that would increase Special Monthly Compensation for the most severely disabled veterans, improve survivor benefits, and codify VA's Bowel and Bladder program. It also includes a version of the Major Richard Star Act, which would fix an injustice preventing combat-injured veterans from receiving their full military benefits. However, the bill's pay-for would codify a proposed change to VA's rating schedule for tinnitus and sleep apnea. The proposed pay-for is very controversial and has divided the veterans community.

Before the bill could be considered, the House held a vote on a motion to send the bill back to the VA Committee and change the way the bill's provisions are paid for. The motion was narrowly defeated by a vote of 211-210. House leaders ultimately stopped any further consideration of H.R. 9237.

Further efforts to advance the measure are not expected to resume until fall. Lawmakers could use the delay to iron out controversial elements that contributed to the close vote. As a reminder, while PVA strongly supports many of the provisions in H.R. 9237, we have historically not supported reducing earned

benefits for current or future veterans to pay for improvements to benefits for other veterans. We are particularly concerned about using VA funding to pay for a Department of Defense obligation (concurrent receipt). You can read our full statement on the bill [here](#).

HVAC SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS LEGISLATIVE HEARING

On June 30, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVAC), Subcommittee on Health held a legislative hearing to consider a broad package of bills aimed at improving veterans' health care access, accountability, and system oversight. The legislation considered addressed a wide range of issues, including reducing delays in veteran burials, expanding access to innovative spinal cord injuries and disorders technologies through the [Veterans STAND Act \(H.R. 6835/S. 3988\)](#), studying the effects of neurological injuries from blast exposure and G-force stress, improving access to care for veterans living in medical deserts, strengthening oversight of the Foreign Medical Program and Medicare coordination, establishing a national task force on caregiving youth, codifying the Coaching into Care program, increasing transparency in VA staffing, improving personnel accountability, and requiring greater public access to Veterans Health Administration policies. PVA submitted a statement for the record on the bills under discussion.

PVA.org

@ParalyzedVeterans

Paralyzed Veterans of America

@PVA1946

@PVA1946



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

HOUSE COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON VA'S IT SYSTEMS, POST-PACT ACT

On July 13, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Technology Modernization held an oversight hearing to examine the VA's implementation of the PACT Act to ensure the department's existing disability claims systems can quickly and efficiently process compensation and pension claims for current and future veterans. During the hearing, PVA Associate Legislative Director Jeremy Villanueva highlighted some of the areas where the VA has fallen short in their efforts to improve the claims process using the latest technology. He pointed out that some of the modernization and consolidation efforts have not led to the drastic improvements promised and that it could be argued some changes have even set the claims process back.

Mr. Villanueva noted that two processes that the VA lacks are stopping payments in the case of a veteran reentering the military or removing a dependent off their award, which often cause significant overpayments that veterans have to pay back. In addition, he highlighted an April 2026 VA Office of the Inspector General [report](#) that identified significant issues with VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation's automation efforts. It noted that nearly 99 percent of the claims that went through the new process contained errors resulting in over \$2.7 million erroneously awarded. The members of the subcommittee thanked PVA for our participation in the hearing and expressed a desire to work with us on legislation to address these concerns. You can read PVA's statement [here](#) and watch a recording of the hearing [here](#).

PVA APPOINTED TO DOT ACAA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On June 3, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Sean Duffy appointed Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley to the Air Carrier Access Act Advisory Committee (ACAA Advisory Committee or Committee)

as a representative for national veterans' organizations representing disabled veterans and Co-Chair of the Committee. The Secretary established the Committee pursuant to the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 to advise on issues related to the air travel needs of passengers with disabilities. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 subsequently extended the statutory authorization for the Committee to September 30, 2028. PVA wrote the original legislation authorizing the Committee and advocated for its passage. To learn more about the committee, please click [here](#).

VA EXPANDS EMERGENCY COMMUNITY CARE NOTIFICATION OPTIONS

Beginning August 10, veterans will have an additional option for alerting VA that they've received emergency care at a non-VA hospital. Under current law, veterans or providers must notify VA within 72 hours of emergency treatment for the care to be considered for authorization under the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP). Previously, this notification was required to be made to the appropriate official at the nearest VA medical facility, often via telephone. The new rule allows for notification through VA's centralized Emergency Care Reporting process, providing a single, nationwide system for reporting emergency care.

Veterans and providers may still notify the nearest VA medical facility, if they choose. This rule does not change veterans' eligibility for emergency care, the requirement to notify VA within 72 hours, or the standards VA uses to determine whether emergency treatment qualifies for payment. Instead, it modernizes the notification process by reducing confusion about where notifications should be sent. The link for the new system will appear [here](#) on August 10.

ED FINALIZES NEW ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Earlier this year, we shared with you that PVA participated in the Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD) Negotiated Rule Making at the Department of Education (ED). The AHEAD committee was focused on a

PVA.org

@ParalyzedVeterans

Paralyzed Veterans of America

@PVA1946

@PVA1946



new accountability framework drafted to replace the Gainful Employment (GE) rule. The GE rule was a debt-to-earnings metric that tracked the amount of student loans someone took out compared to their annual salary for career and for-profit specific training programs.

The new accountability framework is called the Student Tuition and Transparency System (STATS) and was drafted to prevent predatory or expensive programs that lead to low-paying jobs from retaining eligibility for federal funding. Ultimately, if a program fails to prove that their graduates earn more than someone with a high school diploma for two years, they should lose eligibility to Title IV funds (i.e. direct loans). If a program fails a third year, then they lose eligibility to Pell Grants which are funds targeted to low-income students and they do not need to be repaid. Also, the new change applies to undergraduate and graduate programs, which is a departure from the previous GE rule. Click [here](#) to learn more.

DOE ANNOUNCES FIFTH EXTENSION OF EFFECTIVE DATE OF DIRECT FINAL RULE

On June 29, the Department of Energy (DOE) [announced](#) that they were once again extending the effective date of the direct final rule Rescinding Regulations Related to Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs or Activities (General Provisions). The final rule was published on May 16, 2025. In that rule, DOE announced that if significant adverse comments were received by June 16, 2025, the rule would be withdrawn. On July 14, 2025, DOE delayed the effective date due to the receipt of significant adverse comments. On September 11, 2025, DOE announced it was further extending the date to continue to consider comments submitted in response to the direct final rule. The rule was delayed again in December 2025 and March 2026. The effective date of the direct final rule has now been delayed until December 28, 2026. PVA submitted comments expressing our concern about the proposed rule and urged DOE to withdraw it. PVA will continue to monitor this rule.

DOJ PUBLISHES MEMO ARGUING AGAINST OLMSTEAD'S INTEGRATION MANDATE

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of the Legal Counsel, issued a memorandum indicating that in the Supreme Court case, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, the Court did not actually determine that either Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) required states to treat individuals with mental health disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.

Olmstead was a Supreme Court case that discussed the unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities. After the Olmstead case, courts have routinely held that state entities are required to provide community-based services when appropriate. However, in the new memo, DOJ now indicates that Olmstead was misinterpreted, and the ADA and Section 504 do not require states to refrain from unnecessary institutionalization of people with serious mental health conditions.

The DOJ maintains that in prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, neither Section 504 nor the ADA imposed an integration mandate on states in their treatment of people with serious mental health conditions. DOJ also found that neither statute authorizes the responsible agencies to impose such a mandate onto the states. Under the DOJ's memo, states would no longer be required to seek all possible alternatives to assist those with mental health disabilities living in the community rather than in an institution. Memos are not binding on the courts, and, at this time, it is unclear how this memo will be used in the courts. It is also uncertain how this memo will impact people with physical disabilities.

21ST CENTURY ROAD TO HOUSING ACT BECOMES LAW

Over the past few months, we have shared updates to the 21st Century Road to Housing Act, which contains nearly 60 provisions intended to improve the housing market and availability across the country. After being passed in the House and the Senate, the bill made its way to the President's desk. The House transmitted the

PVA.org

@ParalyzedVeterans

 Paralyzed Veterans of America

 @PVA1946

 @PVA1946



bill to the White House in late June, which triggered a 10-day countdown where it could have been signed into law or vetoed by the president. He chose to do neither, and because Congress remained in session, the bill became law July 11 without his signature.

The 21st Century Road to Housing Act aims to reduce red tape for community lenders; make it easier to build manufactured homes to increase the housing supply; and for the first time in American history, the bill created restrictions around Wall Street and private equity investors from owning single family homes. A key provision within the bill codifies that VA disability compensation cannot be considered earned income for a veteran who needs local housing assistance. This means many at risk veterans or veterans experiencing homelessness may finally be able to receive local housing assistance.

NEWS OF NOTE

HUD Secretary Announces Transformation of Fair Housing Office in Internal Email

On July 3, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Assistant Secretary sent an internal email to employees noting plans to reshape HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). This office enforces federal laws and establishes policies to ensure that all Americans have equal access to housing of their choice. FHEO investigates complaints of discrimination against homebuyers and renters and provides assistance to states and localities. The email did not detail any specific details about plans concerning policy or operational changes. The Secretary also mentioned a return to FHEO's "original goals" regarding HUD's Fair Housing Initiatives Program. This program provides money to local nonprofits who help promote and enforce civil rights laws in housing. PVA will continue to monitor this matter for effects on people with disabilities and provide relevant updates on changes to FHEO.

SURVEYS AND COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

FINAL REMINDER: HERL Conducting Online Survey About Accessible Vehicles

The Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL), a collaboration between the University of Pittsburgh and the VA, is conducting an online survey to learn what vehicle features would make driving and travel easier for people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices. By sharing your experiences and preferences, you'll help researchers understand what accessibility features matter most and provide feedback that could guide future vehicle designs. The survey will take less than 15 minutes to complete. To participate, please click [here](#).

Veterans' Committee Activities

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



PVA.org

@ParalyzedVeterans

Paralyzed Veterans of America

@PVA1946

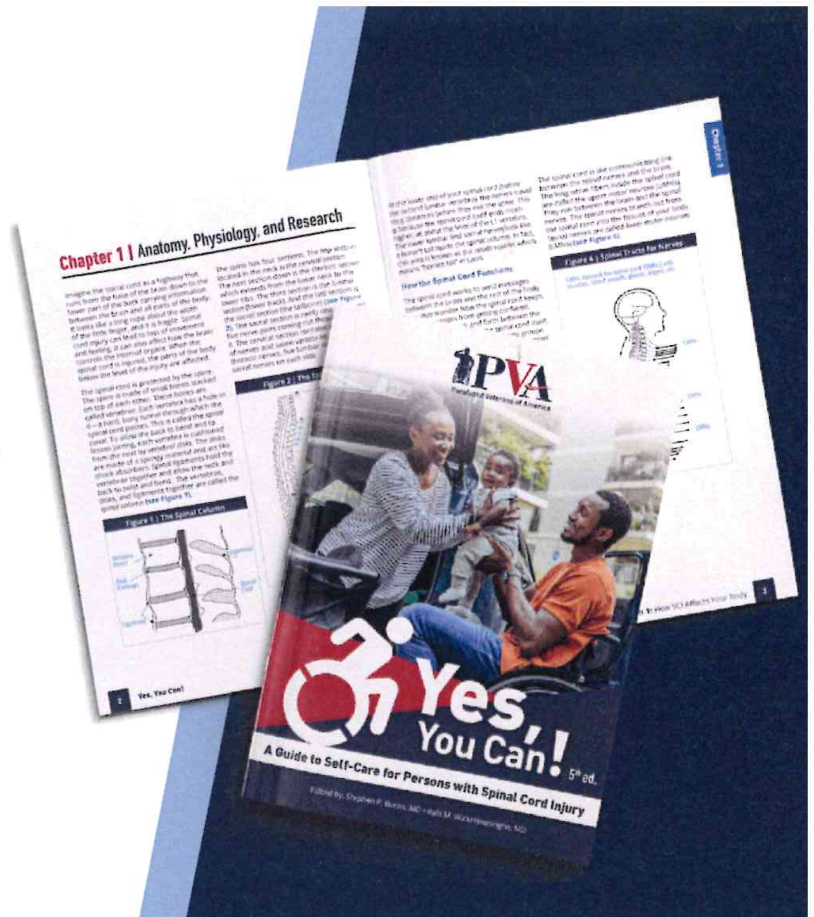
@PVA1946



Yes, You Can!

A Guide to Self-Care for People with Spinal Cord Injury

Scan to Download for Free!



“Yes, You Can! A Guide to Self-Care for People with Spinal Cord Injury” is a resource from Paralyzed Veterans of America that supports individuals navigating life after spinal cord injury. It offers practical advice on health, wellness, and more.

Written by medical experts, it covers bladder and bowel care, skin health, mobility, nutrition, mental well-being, and an active lifestyle. The guide empowers individuals, caregivers, and families with tools for long-term health and independence.

To read or download the guide, visit:
PVA.org/YesYouCan



Paralyzed Veterans of America

Great Plains Chapter

ADAPTIVE FITNESS



Workout with

PAT REYNOLDS

Certified Strength and
Conditioning Specialist

COST: \$25 PER MONTH

***FREE FOR PVA MEMBERS**

- ✓ Increase Endurance
- ✓ Build Muscle
- ✓ Improve Independence
- ✓ Enhance Overall Fitness



GREAT PLAINS PVA

7612 Maple St.
Omaha, NE 68134



Adaptive Fitness Videos

FOLLOW US ON



INSTAGRAM



FACEBOOK



YOUTUBE

Make an Appointment



REYNOLDS@GREATPLAINSPVA.ORG

More Information:
www.greatplainspva.org





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 55 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.