

THE RAMP

Published by Paralyzed Veterans of America, Colonial Chapter



Your New Executive Director Jo Ann Bedsworth

My name is Jo Ann Bedsworth, the new Executive Director of the Colonial Chapter of PVA. I know with the passing of Phyllis Palabrica I have some big shoes to fill. Phyllis was an excellent motivator, she always had achieved greatness with everything she was involved in. I too, hope to make a lasting achievement in my journey with the organization.

To begin with, my first week I was inspired by a member who went to this year's National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Looking at his pictures and seeing the good time he had heightened my enthusiasm for my new position and made coming to work more enjoyable. It's going to be an honor to serve as director for an organization whose mission is to serve veterans, a group that has always been near and dear to me. At this time I would like to make a promise; I will always maintain a commitment to serve for the values and their mission. I will do this with integrity, leadership and loyalty. In closing a quote from Henry Ford:

Team Work

Coming together is a beginning
Keeping together is a progress
Working together is a success

Executive Director,
Jo Ann Bedsworth

ELECTED OFFICERS

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Samuel LaCorte – 302-740-3699

Vice President:

Robert Reuter – 410-732-6119

Secretary/Ramp Editor:

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Ronald P. Hoskins, Sr.

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Wilmington – Ralph Smith

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Philadelphia: 800-795-3628

Washington, DC: 800-424-8200

Visit colonialpva.org for up-to-date information on Washington updates and upcoming events.

Next BOD Meeting Date...

The Colonial Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America Board of Directors meets on the second Wednesday of every month at our office, 700 Barksdale Rd, Unit 7, Newark, DE 19711. Meetings begin at 11:00 a.m. The next BOD meeting will be on September 20th, October's meeting will be on the 11th. All voting members are encouraged to attend our BOD meetings.

Membership Report...

As of March 2017 the Colonial membership is as follows:

SC Life:	192
NSC Life:	116
Total Voting Members:	312
Affiliate:	62
Total Membership:	374

Colonial PVA Member Recreation Reimbursement Fund

Beginning in the upcoming fiscal year, which starts October 1, 2017 and ends September 30, 2018, the Colonial Chapter is initiating a new program to encourage our members' recreational endeavors.

All chapter members will be entitled to \$100 per fiscal year to use toward activities such as dining out with your spouse, going to the movies, attending events, hotel stays, vacation expenses, hobby supplies, etc.

Receipts for such activities will need to be dated and mailed to the Colonial Chapter office (700 Barksdale Rd, Unit 7, Newark, DE 19711) by the end of the fiscal year (9/30/18). Receipts dated before 10/1/17 will not be accepted.

Members may use the entirety of their \$100 at once, or on separate occasions throughout the fiscal year.

The chapter office will keep a running balance of the remaining amount available to each member. Funds will not carry over into the next fiscal year. Unused funds will not be paid to the member, and will be considered forfeit.

Members are asked to submit with their receipts a one to two paragraph description, and a photo if applicable, of how they used their funds, for inclusion in the Chapter newsletter "The Ramp."

The amount allotted to each member may increase in future fiscal years based on available chapter funding.



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WARRIORS
Paralyzed Veterans of America



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866.841.2023

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Regardless of the condition, all vehicles have value and are sold at auction. Proceeds from the sale help provide jobs, care and benefits for severely injured veterans and their families. Scheduling a pickup is free and easy, and you may be eligible for a tax deduction, too! There's no better way to give back to those who have given so much.

Marketing and advertising by The Jeffrey Carlton Charitable Foundation
Ad sponsored by Houston Community Newspapers

There IS something you can do with that old car. Donate it today and help paralyzed veterans.



Senate Approves Appeals Modernization Act

On August 2, 2017, the Senate moved appeals modernization one step closer to becoming a reality. H.R. 2288, the “Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017,” was introduced and overwhelmingly passed in the House earlier this year. The Senate tacked on a few more technical refinements and passed the bill under voice vote just before the August recess. Despite being in recess, the House passed the appeals modernization bill by unanimous consent (meaning there were no objections to the minor technical changes) on August 11, 2017.

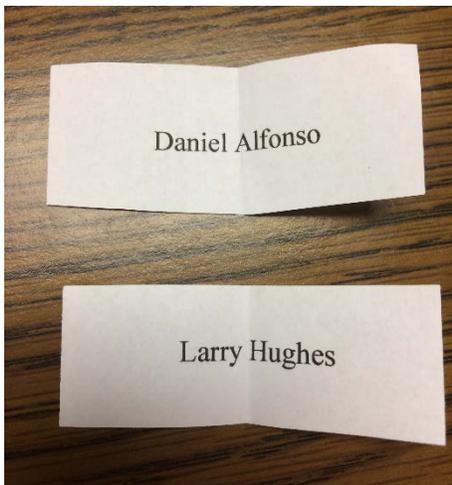
Once the bill is enacted into law, the earliest changes are expected to be seen approximately eighteen months after enactment. The massive overhaul of the disability claims and appeals process has long been in the works, but the new law will require extensive efforts to implement and widespread changes to the regulations that govern the process.

PVA Files Lawsuit over Wheelchair Damage Rule

At the end of July, PVA filed suit against the Department of Transportation (DOT) for abruptly rolling back a rule intended to make airline travel safer and easier for passengers with disabilities. The rule, which requires domestic airlines to track and report data on lost and damaged wheelchairs and scooters, was delayed by the Administration without seeking input from people with disabilities. DOT originally published the rule in November 2016, following a five-year rulemaking process that included input from air travelers, consumer and disability advocacy groups, and airlines.

The rule was scheduled for implementation in January 2018. In March 2017, DOT abruptly delayed the rule’s implementation date by one year, until January 2019, without providing the public any notice or opportunity to comment, in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act. DOT claimed the delay was necessary due to implementation “challenges” faced by the airline industry. However, the only evidence of these challenges DOT presented was a single email the agency received from the airline industry.

Since DOT’s decision, PVA has informed Administration officials and members of Congress about how the rule’s delay will hurt people with disabilities and asked that DOT allow these critical protections to move forward. Together with the complaint, PVA filed a motion to reinstate the rule’s original effective date. The case was filed in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.



Monthly PVA Colonial Chapter Goody Bag Winners

July: Daniel Alfonso | August: Larry Hughes

Each month a member will be chosen at random to receive a prize package of assorted items. The winners will be announced in the bi-monthly newsletter. If you are an announced winner please call the chapter office at 302-861-6671 to confirm your mailing address. Prizes will not be sent unless the office is contacted and assured of a correct mailing address. The office must be contacted before the next bi-monthly newsletter is sent.



Paralyzed Veterans of America Applauds Veterans Appeals Improvement & Modernization Law

WASHINGTON, DC— [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#) (Paralyzed Veterans) Executive Director Sherman Gillums Jr. today released the following statement, after witnessing President Trump sign the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act:

"The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Law represents a major step toward ensuring justice for the veterans, dependents and survivors who believe in their entitlement to a denied benefit. These people aren't asking for a handout; they simply want fairness and timely review when they file appeals. Paralyzed Veterans of America fights on behalf of the most catastrophically disabled veterans with the most complex claims in the system. Our unrivaled expertise is often challenged by a labyrinthine, protracted review process where a growing backlog, coupled with inconsistent and arbitrary decisions, hurt those who rate the benefits they're pursuing. For those appellants who choose to file without an accredited representative, it's nearly impossible to get a fair decision. We commend the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for hearing our concerns and working with us to preserve due process and develop new and improved standards. This new law is a culmination of those efforts. It is also a significant win for President Trump and VA Secretary Shulkin, both of whom are keeping their promise to veterans with the passage of this law."

Congress Approves Choice Funding Extension

Prior to leaving for the August recess, the House of Representatives and Senate approved legislation that would provide additional funding to keep the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Choice program operating. Due to significant increases in utilization of the Choice program over the last 6 months, the VA faced the prospect of the program running out of funding by August 15th. In an effort to relieve that problem, Congress approved a bill that provides approximately \$2.1 billion to keep the Choice program running for an additional six months. The bill also includes funding to open 28 capital leases that have been held up for budget reasons for nearly two years, as well as provisions to improve workforce innovation, recruitment and retention of providers in the VA health care system.

Unfortunately, Congress will be forced to deal with this issue again six months from now. A long-term solution for how VA will manage its community care programs, which includes the current Choice program, has not been finalized. Meanwhile, the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs are already developing their own legislative solutions to community care. They range from VA coordinating all community care decisions to veterans having unfettered choice to decide when and where they will seek care.

PVA has already testified on a couple of occasions this year on the future of the Choice program. In the spring, the VA unveiled its own C.A.R.E. program that it hopes to make the basis of all of its community care going forward. However, much work remains to reach a consensus on the final program, **to include how VA will invest in and sustain its "foundational commitments" (spinal cord injury/disease care, blinded rehabilitation, prosthetics, etc).**

Congress Approves Permanent Change to the Post-9/11 GI Bill

The latest update to the Post-9/11 GI Bill made its way through Congress prior to the August recess and now awaits the President's signature. The "Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2017," wielded strong bipartisan support throughout both chambers of Congress allowing the bill to be fast-tracked to the President's desk. After a unanimous vote in the House, the Senate followed suit by passing the bill by voice vote.

The bill's namesake, the Forever GI Bill, comes from the elimination of the "use it or lose it rule" that requires the benefit to be used within fifteen years. In today's world, it is common for veterans to make career changes later in life. This makes it all the more important to retain education benefits that can help facilitate successful transitions. One significant change makes all Purple Heart recipients eligible for 100 percent of the benefit. Because the benefit percentages are based on time in service, veterans removed from service due to wounds sustained in combat were often unable to reach the full 100 percent rating.

The bill addresses a number of other inadvertent inequities as well. One deals with the Fry Scholarship. Surviving spouses and children of service members who die in the line of duty after September 10, 2001, who are utilizing the GI Bill to attend school are currently ineligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program which fills the gap between the GI Bill benefit amount and full tuition at private institutions. Another oversight in the original law precluded reservists mobilized in support of a Department of Defense (DOD) combatant command and when Governors' request federal assistance in responding to major disasters or emergencies from counting that service time for eligibility.

Other changes include a long-overdue increase in monthly payments for Dependents' Education Assistance (DEA) by approximately \$200. However, the eligibility time period will be reduced from 45 months to 36 months. Most, if not all, GI Bill benefits now cover 36 months of education time, which equates to approximately four school calendar years. The bill also encourages more students to enter into science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs, and it restores benefits to students whose schools closed or lost accreditation in the middle of a semester, costing the veteran a semester of eligibility without actually earning any credits.

While the provisions in the bill were far from controversial, the bill got off to a rocky start as VSOs battled over how it would be funded. The original proposal that had widespread support would have mimicked the Montgomery GI Bill, which required active duty service members to pay a nominal amount of their salary into the program to become eligible. Some groups, however, balked at forcing service members to pay for this benefit. The visceral backlash sunk the bill initially. It regained momentum, however, and was ultimately successful using a different funding mechanism which aligns Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates for GI Bill users with current DOD rates for active duty service members. The GI Bill's current rates were higher than DOD rates, and the reduction in amount will ultimately cover the cost of expanding the GI Bill.

The Colonial Chapter would like to congratulate the 2017-2018 Educational Scholarship Award Winners

Paralyzed Veterans of America's (PVA) primary goal has been to assist its members and their families in improving the quality of their lives. This goal has been addressed through a wide variety of activities, including support of programs designed to provide education and training.

PVA established an Educational Scholarship Program to assist PVA members and their immediate families in gaining a post-secondary education.

Full-Time Student Award Winners - \$1,000 each

Samuel Angeles (University of California, Santa Cruz) CA
Son of Joseph Angeles - Cal-Diego Chapter

Kaylea Bixler (Oklahoma State University) OK
Daughter of Gene Bixler - Mid-America Chapter

Brandon Craig (Rider University) NJ
Son of Larry Craig - Member At Large

Peyton Curry (James Madison University) VA
Daughter of Preston Curry - Mid-Atlantic Chapter

Hope Ezell (Baldwin Wallace University) OH
Daughter of Dwayne Ezell - Buckeye Chapter

Jaylin Jones (Liberty University) VA
Son of Kuishia Jones - Member At Large

Ethen Lund (Pomona College) CA
Son of Eric Lund - Mid-Atlantic Chapter

Bretta Nienow (Creighton University) NE
Granddaughter of Merlin Canfield - North Central Chapter

Nicole Severn (Michigan State University) MI
Daughter of Scot Severn - Michigan Chapter

Olesya Tehan (Wittenberg University) OH
Daughter of George Tehan - Buckeye Chapter

Senate Health Care Reform Bill Introduced

On June 22, 2017, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell released the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), the Senate's version of a bill to "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Developed largely in secret by a few allies of the Majority Leader, the bill was intended for a quick vote under simple majority rules prior to the July 4th Congressional recess. However, strong bipartisan opposition to the measure, including among moderate and conservative Republicans, arose and forced Leader McConnell to postpone the vote. A revised version of the bill was unveiled on July 13. The majority leader has been working to corral the necessary 50 votes (Vice President Pence would be the tie breaker) to proceed under reconciliation rules. Among the provisions of the bill in its latest form are:

Cuts to Medicaid - In addition to phasing out the ACA's Medicaid expansion, which has covered roughly 340,000 veterans nationwide, according to FamiliesUSA, the Senate bill would, according to the Congressional Budget Office, reduce spending in the basic Medicaid program by 35 percent by 2036. Under the limits on Medicaid funding contained in the bill, states would likely be forced to severely restrict the populations covered and services provided by the program. This could put at risk approximately 1.75 million veterans currently covered by traditional Medicaid.

- Pre-existing condition exclusions – The BCRA permits states to waive portions of the ACA's essential health benefit (EHBs) requirements. The ACA requires that certain benefits be included in any insurance plan offered on the individual and small group market. These EHBs include outpatient services, emergency room care, hospitalization, maternity care, mental health and substance abuse services, prescription drugs, rehabilitative and habilitative services, lab tests, preventative care, and pediatric care. With a state waiver, insurers would be able to deny numerous services that people with disabilities, and others with pre-existing conditions rely upon. It would also mean that individuals living in one state may be able to access the services they need, while those in another state may not. People with pre-existing conditions could technically still be able to purchase insurance, just not the insurance that includes the services they need at a cost they can afford.
- Lifetime and annual limits on benefits - The ACA limits the amount that insurers can charge annually to individuals and families for out-of-pocket payments. The Senate proposal would make it easier for states to apply to the federal government to waive these limits. Similarly, while there is language in the bill that continues the prohibition on lifetime coverage caps, these only apply to limits on essential health benefits. If a state changes or eliminates the essential benefit options, lifetime coverage caps could effectively be reinstated. This would have a disproportionate impact on individuals with disabilities who depend on many services now required to be offered under the EHB rules.
- Creation of high risk pools – A state stability fund is proposed to help states bring down premiums and start programs that lower costs for insurers and consumers. The bill includes more than \$180 billion for this fund. Prior to the ACA, 35 states had created high-risk pools to offer coverage to state residents with pre-existing conditions that made them uninsurable. Features adopted by the states to limit enrollment, and thus costs, included premiums set well above the standard non-group market rates, 6 to 12 month exclusion periods for pre-existing conditions, lifetime and annual dollar limits on coverage and deductibles between \$1000 and \$5000.

Continued on next page...

- Other provisions - The revised bill retains several of the taxes included in the ACA such as the 3.8 percent investment income tax on people making over \$200,000 a year, a tax on incomes of health insurance executives and the Medicare health insurance tax that was created to extend the life of the Hospital Insurance trust fund. The newest version of the BCRA includes \$45 billion in funding to address the opioid crisis. Another new provision in the bill would allow funds in Health Savings Accounts to go toward insurance costs.
- Cruz amendment – An amendment is expected to be offered by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) allowing health plans with slimmer benefits packages to be sold on and off the health market exchanges under the assumption that this would make these insurance plans cheaper. However, insurers would also be required to sell at least one ACA-compliant plan. Critics of this amendment fear that segmenting the market in this fashion would drive younger, healthier people to the minimalist plans, leaving older, sicker constituents with the more expansive health plans. This would likely cause premiums for the more robust insurance plans to increase significantly. To protect insurers who attract a disproportionate share of “high risk” individuals, the bill will include a \$70 billion fund to offset costs for these companies.

Since the 115th Congress began debating health care reform, PVA has expressed its strong desire that these deliberations be done in a bipartisan fashion under regular order with stakeholders given an opportunity to consider and weigh in on various policy options. By using reconciliation, which requires only a 50 vote margin to win passage, to advance the Senate’s legislation, several issues of particular concern to PVA will go unaddressed. For example, the children of catastrophically disabled veterans covered by CHAMPVA will continue to be excluded from current policies that provide for dependent insurance coverage up to age 26. There have been some questions whether the tax credits meant to make health insurance affordable would be available to veterans who are eligible but not enrolled in the VA health care system. PVA has been informed that reconciliation procedures preclude the opportunity to clarify this issue.

The new version of the BCRA retains almost \$800 billion in Medicaid cuts over ten years. Between traditional Medicaid, the Medicaid expansion as well as the ACA premium tax credits, there has been a 40 percent decrease in uninsured non-elderly veterans between 2013 and 2015.¹ Most of these veterans are older than 45, the age group most adversely affected by the Senate bill’s provisions allowing older individuals to be charged up to five times the standard premium amount.

Some of these veterans may be able to enroll in the VA health care system under current rules but others, because of policies that bar enrollment to certain veterans above modest income thresholds, will be denied access to the VA. Congress could act to open up the VA health care system to all veterans but it is unclear whether the VA has the budgetary and system capacities able to handle even half of the veterans now covered under Medicaid.

¹ Urban Institute, April 2017, “Veterans Saw Broad Coverage Gains Between 2013 and 2015”



Paralyzed Veterans of America

ANNUAL AIR RIFLE & AIR PISTOL PROGRAM

Arizona Air Rifle/Archery & Boccia Tournament*
Sept. 6-8, 2017
Phoenix, AZ

West Virginia Air Rifle & Boccia*
Oct. 27-28, 2017
Martinsburg, WV

KY-IN Air Rifle & Boccia Tournament*
Nov 16-18, 2017
Lexington, KY

Cal-Diego Air Rifle Tournament
Jan. 22-23, 2018
San Diego, CA

Mid-Atlantic Air Rifle Tournament
March 7-8, 2018
Richmond, VA

Wisconsin Air Rifle Tournament
March 23-25, 2018
Milwaukee, WI

Buckeye Air Rifle Tournament
April 21-22, 2018
Geneva, OH

*indicates combined events

PARALYZED VETERANS NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS CIRCUIT

Wisconsin Shooting Sports Tournament & Pistol Tournament
Aug. 4-6, 2017
Pistol & Rifle Tournament - Aug. 4
Green Bay, WI

North Central Shooting Sports Tournament
Sept. 8-10, 2017
Pistol Tournament - Sept. 8
Sioux Falls, SD

Keystone Shooting Sports Tournament
Sept. 22-24, 2017
Pistol Tournament - Sept. 22
Clairton, PA

Arizona Shooting Sports Tournament
Nov. 3-5, 2017
Pistol Tournament - Nov. 3
Phoenix, AZ

Mid-Atlantic Shooting Sports Tournament
Nov. 10-12, 2017
Charles City, VA

Florida Gulf Coast Shooting Sports Tournament
March 1-3, 2018
Odessa, FL

Nevada Shooting Sports Tournament
March 16-18, 2018
Pistol Tournament - March 16
Las Vegas, NV

Cal-Diego Shooting Sports Tournament & Cal-Diego Air Rifle/Pistol
March 23-25, 2018
Pistol & Rifle Tournament - March 23
Redlands, CA

Vaughan Shooting Sports Tournament
April 20-22, 2018
Edwardsville, IL

Minnesota Shooting Sports Tournament
May 18-20, 2018
Minneapolis, MN

Lone Star Shooting Sports Tournament
June 22-24, 2018
Waxahachie, TX

Iowa Shooting Sports Tournament & Pistol Tournament
June 15-17, 2018
Pistol Event - June 15, 2018
Cedar Rapids, IA

PARALYZED VETERANS BASS TOUR

Mid-America Bass Tournament
Sept. 22-24, 2017
Eufaula, OK

Lone Star Bass Tournament
Sept. 29—Oct. 1, 2017
Garland, TX

Southeastern Bass Tournament
Oct. 13-15, 2017
Evans, GA

Vaughan Bass Tournament
Oct. 27-29, 2017
Mt. Vernon, IL

Florida Gulf Coast Bass Tournament
April 6-8, 2018
Kissimmee, FL

KY-IN Bass Tournament
May 4-6, 2018
Kuttawa, KY

National Bass Tournament
June 1-3, 2018
Marbury, MD

Mid-Atlantic Bass Tournament
June 8-10, 2018
Richmond, VA

ANNUAL PARALYZED VETERANS/NWPA BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT SERIES

Mid-Atlantic Billiards Tournament
Sept. 15-17, 2017
Virginia Beach, VA

Mid-South Billiards Tournament
Oct. 13-14, 2017
Memphis, TN

Mid-Atlantic Billiards Tournament
March 23-25, 2018
Midlothian, VA

Mid-America Billiards Tournament
April 20-22, 2018
Oklahoma City, OK

Mountain States Billiards Tournament
May 4-5, 2018
Fountain, CO

Buckeye Billiards Tournament**
June 22-23, 2018
Wickliffe, OH

**non-sanctioned events

ANNUAL PARALYZED VETERANS/AWBA BOWLING TOURNAMENT SERIES

Great Plains Bowling Tournament
July 6-9, 2017
Council Bluffs, IA

Mountain States Bowling Tournament
Aug. 24-27, 2017
Colorado Springs, CO

Mid-Atlantic Bowling Tournament
Sept. 22-24, 2017
Glen Allen, VA

Nevada Bowling Tournament
Nov. 30-December 3, 2017
Las Vegas, NV

Florida Gulf Coast Bowling Tournament
Feb. 23-25, 2018
Tampa, FL

Vaughan Bowling Tournament
May 3-6, 2018
Romeoville, IL

Mid-America Bowling Tournament
TBD
Shawnee, OK

BOCCIA

Nevada Boccia Tournament
Jan. 26-27, 2018
Las Vegas, NV

Cal-Diego Boccia Tournament
Feb. 20-21, 2018
San Diego, CA

PARALYZED VETERANS RACING

Off-Road Handcycling Championships
Aug. 18-20, 2017
Crested Butte, CO

Pensacola Cycling
Sept. 16-17, 2017
Pensacola, FL

Air Force Marathon
Sept. 16, 2017
Dayton, OH

Pocahontas State Park Off-Road Ride
Sept. 30, 2017
Richmond, VA

38TH NVWG

July 30-Aug. 4, 2018
Orlando, FL

For more information, visit:
pva.org/sports

If you would like to have future newsletters delivered electronically via email, please send us a message to colonialpva@aol.com with "Member Email" in the subject bar. Email communication with our members reduces our mailing fees, and gets information out to you sooner.

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