



North Central Chapter

North Central Chapter

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1-605-336-0494 * 1-800-505-4782
Email: info@ncpva.org Website: www.ncpva.org
National PVA Website: www.pva.org



Volume 364

April/May 2023

Upcoming Events

April/May 2023



April 9 . . . Easter Sunday

April 13 . . . Membership Meeting,
Chapter Office, Noon Luncheon and
1:00 PM Meeting

April 19 . . . SD Veterans Council
Meeting, Michael J. Fitzmaurice Vet-
erans Home, Hot Springs, SD, 3:00
PM, MT

April 20 . . . SF Veterans Council
Meeting, Alliance Building, SF, 7 PM

April 21/23 . . . Vietnam and ERA
Veterans Reunion, Ramkota, Rapid
City

April 28 . . . Arbor Day

May 5/6 . . . Howard Wood Dakota
Relays, Howard Wood Field

May 9/13 . . . PVA National Conven-
tion, Omaha, NE

May 11 . . . No Membership Meeting

May 14 . . . Mother's Day

May 18 . . . SF Veterans Council
Meeting, Alliance Building, SF, 7 PM

May 20 . . . Armed Forces Day Pro-
gram, Alliance Building, SF, 10 AM

May 25/26 . . . 20th Annual NCPVA
Walleye Fishing Event, Chamberlain

May 29 . . . Memorial Day Program,
SD State Veterans Cemetery, 10 AM

May 29 . . . Memorial Day, Office
Closed

Notice of PVA North Central Chapter Election

Election Timeline

February 1

Nominations Open. Nominations may be made in person or by any other electronic means. **Submit bio/photo and why you would be a good candidate by March 17th.**

April 28

Nominations Closed.

May 1

Ballots will be mailed out with a self-addressed return envelope. Ballots must be returned in the envelope in a timely manner

June 8

Election results will be reported at the Annual Membership Meeting.

October 1

New term of office begins.

In accordance with Chapter bylaws, election of officers will be held annually, and the officers will serve a one (1) year term. Officers include: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. At the Annual June Chapter Membership Meeting, the Election Committee will report the election results.

Certification of Membership

If a write-in candidate be elected, he or she shall have thirty (30) days to successfully complete the certification process, if not previously certified. If you have any questions on the election procedure, contact the Chapter Office.

SD State Veterans Cemetery Endowment Fund

With the passing of SB 91, the South Dakota Veterans Council has established an Endowment Fund with the South Dakota Community Foundation. This fund will be used for the maintenance and operations of the veterans cemetery.

The South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery will be located at the 1-90/I-229 area in Sioux Falls, SD and will encompass up to 50 acres of land donated by the City of Sioux Falls.

All federally defined veterans, spouses, and dependent children are eligible for burial in the State Veterans Cemetery.

We are proud to be able to give our veterans their final resting place on the eastside and keep them close to their families.

If you would like to contribute to the Endowment Fund, please click on the following link:

<https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-advisors/existing-funds/south-dakota-veterans-cemetery-fund/>



Monday, May 29th
Office will be closed

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

**North Central Chapter
Paralyzed Veterans of America**

OFFICERS

President, Chuck Doom
Vice President, Harlan Schmidt
Secretary, Greg Brandner
Treasurer, Gene Murphy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Duane Biesboer
Perry Grimme Rodney Melcher

PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Chapter Hospital Liaison: Chuck Doom
Legislation Director: Terry Paulsen/Gene Murphy
Volunteer Coordinator: Charles Doom
VAVS: Lisa Cummings/Sheri Kloes
Membership Officer: Duane Biesboer
Newsletter Editor: Barbara Priesz
Sports Director: Mike Olson/Charles Doom
P.O.C. Women Veterans Committee: Bonnie Schmidt
P.O.C. MS Committee: Perry Grimme

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Michael Olson

NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER

Brad Friez

VA Dakota Regional Office
2501 West 22nd Street, Room 100
Sioux Falls, SD 57105

605-333-6801

800-795-3632

OFFICE STAFF

Lisa Cummings, Executive Director
Terry Paulsen, Government Relations Director
Barbara Priesz, Administrative Assistant
Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 8 - 4

Sioux Falls VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Melissa Suter, Social Worker
605-336-3230 ext. 7898

Fargo VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Tracy Lamont, SCI Coordinator
701-239-3765

Black Hills VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Amber Jones, SCI Coordinator
605-347-2511 ext. 17003

— Attention Members —

If you are receiving your newsletter by mail and would like to receive this via email, please contact me at the Chapter Office (LisaC@ncpva.org/605-336-0494) with your email address. This will help save the Chapter on postage and printing costs.



<http://www.facebook.com/ncpva>

Disclaimer: The North Central Chapter PVA newsletter is published six times a year. It serves its members and interested parties by informing them about chapter activities, veterans' issues, SCI related matters, advocacy and legislative developments and other relevant issues concerning disabilities and the disabled community. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the North Central Chapter, its Officers, Board Members or the Editor. Similarly, appearance of advertising herein does not constitute an endorsement of their products or services. The editor has the right to edit all articles.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Membership-Duane Biesboer

The Chapter currently has a total of 159 members and 85 Associate Members.

Regular membership is FREE! If you know of anyone who has a spinal cord injury or disease, please have the Veteran contact the Chapter office.

Beginning October 1st, all Associate Members will be invoiced for Annual Dues. Annual dues are \$30 per year and Life Dues are \$200.00.

Thank you to those who have sent in their dues!!

Please notify the Chapter when you have a change of address.

Volunteer Program-Charles Doom

The Chapter had 159 hours for the month of February; YTD - 1078. Scott Bentz and Perry Grimme were February/March 2023 Volunteers of the Month. Remember to look for your volunteer number in the newsletter and win a \$25 Gift Card! If you see your number, call the Chapter Office!



“Friends Aiming High”

by John Green

Framed and Matted - \$275

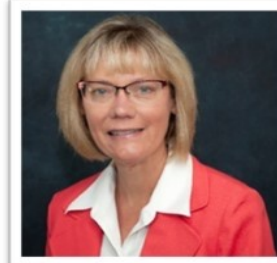
Print Only - \$75

To order your print, please contact the Chapter Office at (605) 336-0494



988 - SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Sioux Falls VA Director Announcement



I am pleased to announce the appointment of Ms. Sara Ackert, as the Medical Center Director for VA Sioux Falls Health Care System, VISN 23 effective March 12, 2023. Ms. Ackert is currently the Associate Director of Resources and Operations for VA Central Iowa Health Care System.

Ms. Ackert holds a Master of Healthcare Administration from Des Moines University, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing with emphasis in psychology from Grandview College. She is a graduate of the VHA Executive Career Field (ECF) Leadership Development Program and is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE).

Ms. Ackert has been with the Department of Veterans Affairs for over 33 years and has proven success in health care operations. She began her VA career at VA Central Iowa Health Care System as a staff nurse in the ICU progressing to positions of increasing responsibility to include Quality Management Specialist, Compliance Officer, Public Affairs Officer, Administrative Officer to the Chief of Staff, Administrative Officer to the Medical Center Director and Associate Medical Center Director VA Sioux Falls Health Care System as well as a number of details as Acting Medical Center Director.

Ms. Ackert has a strong history of leadership, managing change and building solid professional coalitions. I am confident she will continue to be an asset to our VISN, the Medical Center employees, volunteers, as well as the Sioux Falls health care partners, community and Veterans we are honored to serve.

I would like to thank Dr. Timothy Pendergrass for serving as the acting director during the transition, and to thank you for your continued support during this transition of Directors. I know that you will join me as we welcome Ms. Ackert.

Robert P. McDivitt, FACHE

Executive Director,

VA Midwest Health Care Network (VISN 23)

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER



Reunion

VIETNAM AND ERA

VETERANS (ALL VETS WELCOME)

APRIL 21 - 23, 2023

RAMKOTA, (EXIT 59) 2111 LACROSSE
RAPID CITY, SD

CONTACT: "JACK" DEAN - 605-786-7064 FOR MORE INFO
RAMKOTA - ROOMS \$80 + TAXES - MENTION THE REUNION
RESERVATIONS - 605 303-7143 OR 844 205-0002
FRIDAY - ARRIVAL DAY; REGISTRATION
SATURDAY - AGENT ORANGE FORUM - BANQUET- FUND RAISER
OPEN CLASSIC CAR SHOW, BRING YOUR CLASSIC
AUCTION; LIVE MUSIC (KIM & THE CLASSICS); OPEN BAR
SUNDAY, MEMORIAL SERVICE 10:00 a.m.

REGISTRATION - \$75 EACH PERSON

NAME : _____ SERVICE: _____

GUEST NAME: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____ PHONE # _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Mail to: VVA Chapter 463; P.O. Box 2922; Rapid City, SD 57709-2922

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

VA increases Maximum Life Insurance Coverage for Veterans and Service Members by \$100,000

WASHINGTON — Beginning March 1st, VA is increasing the maximum amount of life insurance coverage available to Veterans and service members from \$400,000 to \$500,000 for [Veterans' Group Life Insurance \(VGLI\)](#) and [Servicemembers Group Life Insurance \(SGLI\)](#). This increase in coverage reflects the current cost of living and helps ensure that the families of Veterans and service members will have the financial support they deserve after their loved ones pass away.

Veterans who are under age 60 and currently enrolled in VGLI will be able to purchase additional coverage in \$25,000 increments up to \$500,000. All active duty, guard, and reserve service members eligible for SGLI will automatically receive the increased coverage on March 1st.

“All Veterans and service members deserve to know that when they pass away, their families will be taken care of,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “This increase in coverage will help our country keep that promise, ensuring that the families of these heroes will get the financial support they need.”

VA currently serves nearly 6 million Veterans, service members, and their families with more than \$1.2 trillion of insurance. Life insurance options include [SGLI](#), which eligible service members are automatically signed up for while serving; [VGLI](#), which Veterans can transition to from SGLI or apply for within 1 year and 120 days of leaving the service; [VA Life](#), a new option that provides up to \$40,000 of whole life insurance for all Veterans, age 80 or under, with service-connected disabilities rated from 0-100%; and [more](#).

Under this increase, the SGLI premium rate will remain the same, meaning that service members will receive maximum coverage for \$30 per month, plus \$1 for Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI) coverage. Service members who separate from service with SGLI coverage at the new higher amount can convert their coverage to VGLI. Service members who do not wish to keep the increased SGLI coverage amount can elect a reduced coverage amount or decline coverage online through the SGLI Online Enrollment System (SOES) on [milConnect](#). If coverage is reduced or declined by March 31, service members will not be charged for the increased coverage amount. This increase in life insurance is a part of the [Supporting Families of the Fallen Act](#). For more information about life insurance options, Veterans and servicemembers can visit [VA's life insurance portal](#).

VA announces Transition of Deputy Secretary Donald Remy

WASHINGTON — Today, March 1st, [Deputy Secretary Donald Remy](#) announced that he will be stepping down as VA's deputy secretary on April 1st. A former Army captain and longtime public servant, Mr. Remy was nominated by President Biden on April 23, 2021 and has served honorably as deputy secretary since he was sworn in by Secretary Denis McDonough on July 19, 2021.

[Guy Kiyokawa](#), VA's assistant secretary for enterprise integration, will serve as acting deputy secretary when Mr. Remy departs. In his current role, Mr. Kiyokawa advises VA on strategic planning, performance, and risk management; policy and analysis; data analytics, statistics, and governance; and interagency coordination and collaboration. Mr. Kiyokawa served in the U.S. Army as a Medical Service Corps officer.

“Deputy Secretary Remy is a great leader, a true friend, and a steadfast public servant who has fought like hell every day for our nation's Veterans,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “He's helped lead VA through the pandemic and to the point where we are delivering more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before. We fully respect his decision to move on after nearly two years of unwavering service. It's been an honor to serve alongside him.”

“Assistant Secretary Kiyokawa is a lifelong public servant and tireless advocate for his fellow Veterans,” added **Secretary McDonough**. “He will do an excellent job helping lead VA as we transition from Mr. Remy to a new, Senate-confirmed deputy secretary.”

“There is no greater mission than serving our nation's Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors – and it's been the honor of a lifetime to do that here at VA,” said **Deputy Secretary Donald Remy**. “I thank President Biden, Secretary McDonough, and all of VA for this incredible opportunity. Most of all, I thank my fellow Veterans for the privilege of serving them as deputy secretary of Veterans Affairs.”

VA is working with the White House to nominate a candidate for deputy secretary as soon as possible.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, SPORTS & REC

Howard Wood Dakota Relays 2023

Friday/Saturday, May 5-6

Howard Wood Field, Sioux Falls, SD

Free Admission

For the past several years, the Howard Wood Dakota Relays has established a **MILITARY ENTRANCE** at the front gates of Howard Wood Field to allow members and former members of the National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, active components, and all veterans to be admitted free.

The Dakota Relays are on Friday/Saturday, May 5th and May 6th this year at Howard Wood Field. Field events begin at 11:00 AM Friday with running events beginning at 2:00 PM on Friday and 9:00 AM Saturday morning. The final event will be contested at 6:30 PM Saturday evening.

This invitation is being extended to all the above and their immediate families. All veterans or service members need to do is identify themselves at the gate, and they will be admitted without question. ID cards are not necessary.

The sacrifices of all our service members and veterans of all eras are appreciated, and this opportunity is to thank them!

Firefighters/PVA Joe Niemeyer Memorial **20th Annual "Gone Fishing" Walleye Fishing** **Event**

The PVA North Central Chapter/Firefighters is pleased to announce the 20th Annual Firefighters/PVA Joel Niemeyer Memorial "Gone Fishing" Walleye Event in Chamberlain/Oacoma, SD on May 25-26, 2023.

This event will be limited to the first 45 disabled anglers who respond.

PVA North Central Chapter will cover the cost of lodging on the night of Thursday, May 25th, for PVA members, disabled anglers, firefighters and volunteers who would like to participate in this event.

This is a fun non-competitive event!

For further registration information and questions, please contact PVA North Central Chapter, 209 North Garfield Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57104, Telephone (605) 336-0494 or 1-800-505-4782

42nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games

Portland, OR, July 4-9, 2023

(Registration ends Wednesday, April 5, 2023)

Welcome to the 42nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games!

The Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America are so excited to finally bring the NVWG to Portland, Oregon! Set along the Columbia River and nestled between three volcanoes--Mt. Hood, Mt. Adams, and the latest to lose its top, Mt. St. Helens--the stage is set for energy packed competitions.

Many thanks go out to the Portland VA Health Care System who is serving as the host of this year's Wheelchair Games. They were ready to go in 2020 and have kept up the momentum to make sure your experience is a memorable one.

This is going to be a NVWG for the record books! Refer to the 2023 National Veterans Wheelchair Games Event Guide for details on each of this year's sporting events, to include our new medal event Pickleball and exhibition events, Bass Fishing and Cornhole. You never know, one of them may be a new medal event in 2024! We'll look forward to your feedback.

The 2023 National Veterans Wheelchair Games Event Guide provides event information, game rules, and logistical guidance to help all Veteran participants have a safe and successful experience in Portland. Please review this Guide carefully. Additionally, if you are a food lover or an avid outdoorsman/woman, you are in for a treat and may want to plan a few more days to tour the area!

We look forward to seeing you in Portland!

Dave Tostenrude

Director, National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Department of Veterans Affairs

Jen Purser

Senior Associate Director, Sports and Recreation, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Additional information will be updated and available at WheelchairGames.org, as well as on the 2023 Wheelchair Games app.

(Sports & Rec - continued on Page 14)

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, FUNDRAISING



We're proud to be a Thrivent Choice®-enrolled organization. Through the Thrivent programs, we are eligible to receive grant dollars, fee-free donations, and support from Thrivent Action Team service projects.

To learn more about Thrivent's membership benefits and generosity programs visit thrivent.com/generosity

Qualified Charitable Distributions



The Pension Protection Act of 2006 first allowed taxpayers age 70½ or older to make tax-free charitable donations directly from their IRAs. Technically, these taxpayers were allowed to exclude from gross income otherwise taxable distributions from their IRA ("qualified charitable distributions," or QCDs), up to \$100,000, that were paid directly to a qualified charity.

These gifts are also known as "Charitable IRA rollovers." The law was originally scheduled to expire in 2007, but was extended periodically through 2014 by subsequent legislation, and finally made permanent by the Protect Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015.

**Newsletter Booster Program
Thank you for your support!**

Alan & Kathryn Gobczynski
Paul Hanson
Dennis Hahnemann
Jim and Marilyn Arneson

Please support your local Chapter!

Newsletter Booster Program

The North Central Chapter PVA publishes the newsletter 6 times per year. We would like to invite our PVA members, Associate Members, and business associates to help support the Newsletter Booster Program. Your name will be published in each newsletter (unless otherwise specified) for only \$10.00. Please help defray the cost of publishing by supporting **YOUR** Chapter. Thank you!

I wish to make the following donation to the Newsletter Booster Program:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Amount of donation \$ _____

**Send all remittance payable to:
PVA North Central Chapter, 209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104**

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN

VA Relaxes Masking Requirements at Medical Facilities

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has relaxed the masking requirement at VA medical facilities. This update ensures the safety of veterans while accommodating individual masking preferences and aligning with CDC guidelines.

Moving forward, the VA will base its masking guidelines on the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels (low, medium, and high) and healthcare facilities' conditions.

When health protection levels are high, masking will remain required. However, when health protection levels are low or medium, medical center leadership will conduct a facility risk assessment to determine if it is appropriate for masking to be optional in certain areas at their facility. Previously, masking had been required at all times in VA medical facilities, regardless of health protection levels.

“This new policy will ensure the safety of Veterans and VA health care providers, while accommodating individual masking preferences,” said Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal. “We're trying to be as open as possible to veteran and clinician and staff preferences alike, while aligning with CDC guidelines.”

Regardless of health protection level or healthcare facility conditions, masking will still be required in high-risk areas such as chemotherapy units, acute inpatient medical/surgical units, intensive care units, posttransplant units, dialysis units, etc.

Masking will also be required at all times for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or other viral respiratory infections. VHA will monitor any changes to CDC guidelines and update VHA COVID-19 guidelines as necessary.

Visit:

www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/

for more information regarding the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels.

Veterans can now Access their Disability Benefit Claim Decisions Online

Veterans can now access their disability benefit claim decision notice letters electronically on VA.gov, empowering them to quickly and easily see their disability decisions. Before this option was available, Veterans had to wait for a paper copy of their decision notice to be mailed to them.

While previous iterations of VA.gov allowed Veterans to access benefits summary letters, they could not access the full copy of these decision notification letters from their electronic claims folders.

This service became available to Veterans on VA.gov on Jan. 17. Since launching, nearly 280,000 decision notice letters have been downloaded.

“Veterans now have access to their benefits decisions anytime, anyplace – right at their fingertips,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “VA disability benefits can also open the door to other federal and state benefits, so quick and easy access to a decision means quicker access to the additional benefits Veterans deserve.”

The new electronic option is also expected to reduce calls to the National Call Centers, freeing up call center respondents to answer other questions and requests from Veterans and their families.

To access their decision letters, Veterans can log in to VA.gov and [check the status of their claim](#). For more details, visit [VA News](#).

Vet Centers Up Date

The Sioux Falls and Rapid City Vet Centers are open and continue to provide the following services:

Individual Counseling (face-to-face, telehealth and phone visits)

Group Counseling (telehealth)

Marital and Family Counseling

Military Sexual Trauma

Please give them a call to schedule an appointment!

- Sioux Falls Vet Center (605) 330-4552
- Rapid City Vet Center (605) 348-0077

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN

Expanding VA Long-Term Care Options

VA is precluded from paying room and board fees at assisted living facilities. This policy hinders veterans from utilizing this long-term care option.

Recently, a bipartisan group of Senators introduced S. 495, the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act. This legislation would create a pilot program to allow VA to pay room and board fees at assisted living facilities.

The pilot will take place with eligible veterans at six Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs) nationwide, including at least two program sites located in rural or highly rural areas, and at least two sites must be State Veterans Homes. If successful, this pilot could set a model for the VA to expand that service to all qualifying veterans in the future.

Expanding Concurrent Receipt

PVA believes Congress should pass legislation allowing all military retirees to retain their full military retired pay and VA disability compensation without any offsets.

Currently, only veterans with disability ratings above 50 percent and more than 20 years of service are eligible to receive the full amount of their Department of Defense (DOD) retirement and VA disability compensation payments, leaving behind medically retired combat veterans with less than 20 years of service.

Recently, legislation was reintroduced in the Senate to provide combat-injured veterans with their full, earned disability compensation and retired pay. S. 344, the Major Richard Star Act, would amend the existing policy for medically retired combat veterans, allowing them to receive their full VA disability and DOD retirement payments.

More than two-thirds of Congress supported this legislation last year and a greater effort to pass this bill is expected in the 118th Congress.

CFPB Cautions Veterans About Claims Help

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) recently [cautioned](#) veterans about organizations offering to help them submit their initial claims to VA for a fee. These organizations often call themselves “coaches” or “consultants” and advertise their ability to assist with a VA benefits claim but may not be accredited to practice before the VA.

As a reminder, all of PVA's Service Officers are accredited by VA and will assist veterans, dependents, and survivors free of charge.

New VA Mission Statement Recognizes Sacred Commitment to All Veterans, their Families, Caregivers and Survivors

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced an updated version of its 1959 mission statement. The new mission statement is:

“To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”

This new mission statement is inclusive of all those who have served in our nation's military — including women Veterans — as well as Veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

The previous mission statement was: “To fulfill President Lincoln's promise ‘to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.’” This previous mission statement is posted in roughly 50% of VA's facilities.

Over the coming months, VA's new mission statement will replace the previous version.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Advance Directives ensure Veterans' Future Care Reflects their Current Wishes

At VA, Veterans typically have control and the final say in the kind of health care they receive. However, Veterans are sometimes unable to make these decisions and need help devising a plan to ensure that their future medical care reflects their current wishes.

As a virtual care provider, Heather Armstrong, who works with the Clinical Resource Hub at [VISN 10](#), sees the benefits of offering Veterans the opportunity to address sensitive needs - like completing an [Advance Directive](#) - from the comfort of home.

Advance directives—sometimes called “living wills”—inform medical providers of a patient’s wishes if they cannot communicate. Doctors encourage all Veterans to make an advance directive and to ask for help if the forms seem intimidating.

Difficult conversations but good idea

“I encourage Veterans to have conversations about advance directives ahead of time with family members, particularly those they will select as their health care powers of attorney,” Armstrong said. “The conversations can be difficult but it is always a good idea to equip loved ones or those making decisions on your behalf with plans reflecting your health care preferences.”

Armstrong recommends that anyone looking to learn more about planning for future health care needs to check out the [National Advance Care Planning Program](#), which creates a comfortable space for groups of Veterans, families and caregivers to discuss advance care planning. She also recommends Veterans ask their Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) social worker for additional information on Advance Care Planning.

PACT social workers are an invaluable resource for Veterans because they can lighten their burden. The VISN 10 CRH Social Work program virtually supports PACT teams across the region when they experience gaps in social work staff. The virtual social work program steps in to provide interim and timely support to Veterans to avoid delays in establishing important planning documents and more.

(continued in next column)

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Clinical Resource Hubs are there to help

With Armstrong’s help, local sites can host virtual social work activities more efficiently. “I’ve been able to do a lot of phone and telehealth coverage. I’m just trying to get the word out about how much assistance we can provide to Veterans through virtual support of local PACT teams,” she added.

Whether Veterans need assistance with applying for VA benefits, outlining their wishes for an advance directive, or working with a care team to recover from a medical procedure, VA social workers and CRH are there to help.

For more on how Clinical Resource Hubs make a difference in VA health care, visit the [Clinical Resource Hubs \(CRH\)](#) website.



South Dakota Veterans Council

The SD Veterans Council will hold their meeting

on **Wednesday, April 19, 2023**

Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home,
Hot Springs, SD, 3:00 PM, MT

You are welcome to attend!



**CAREGIVER
SUPPORT LINE**
 1-855-260-3274

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**Correcting Benefits for Medically Retired Vets a 'Top Priority' for Senate VA Committee, Tester Vows**

By Rose L. Thayer, Stars and Stripes

Senator Jon Tester, D-Montana, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said Tuesday, February 28th, that the Maj. Richard Star Act is a top priority to pass into law this year. The bill would allow all medically retired veterans to receive full retirement and disability payments. The law now only allows veterans with more than 20 years of service and at least a 50% disability rating to receive both.

3-1-2023 -- This will be the year that the law is changed to allow all medically retired veterans to receive full retirement and disability checks — not just veterans with more than 20 years of service, Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., vowed Tuesday.

“This is a top priority for nearly every veterans service group,” Tester, the chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said during a news conference about the bill known as the Maj. Richard Star Act. “We'll take our marching orders from them. They're the folks that served.”

The Star Act, which was first introduced in 2021, would allow veterans who were forced to retire for medical reasons prior to reaching 20 years of service to be eligible to receive full benefit payments from their Defense Department retirement and Department of Veterans Affairs disability.

The law now requires a veteran's retirement check be reduced based on the amount of his or her disability payment. This is known in government as concurrent receipt. A 2004 change to the law allowed for veterans with a disability rating more than 50% and more than 20 years of service to receive the full amount of both payments.

More than 50,000 combat-injured veterans would benefit from the Star Act, if it passed, according to the Military Officers Association of America.

Tester reintroduced the bill Feb. 9 with Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, and they have collected 49 cosponsors for the bill. (continued in next column)

(continued from first column)

Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla., introduced the House version of the bill Monday with Rep. Raul Ruiz, D-Calif., and said during the news conference that it already has 200 cosponsors

The Star Act also has the backing of The Military Coalition, which is comprised of 35 military and veteran service organizations that represent more than 5.5 million service members, veterans, family members and survivors.

“Military retirement pay and disability compensation are two separate benefits. For those injured in the line of duty, this offset creates an undue financial burden on the family of a disabled veteran,” Vietnam Veterans of America National President Jack McManus said in a statement. “Those injured in defense of the U.S. Constitution have earned these benefits. It is time for Congress to address this injustice and change this law.”

If passed, the law would cost about \$7 billion for 10 years, Tester said.

“People are going to argue that this costs too much money to do,” he said. “If we're going to send them off to war, we take care of them when they get home. Otherwise, we shouldn't send them off to war to begin with.”

Richard Star, the veteran for whom the legislation is named, served in the Army Reserve and deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. He medically retired in 2018 after being diagnosed with lung cancer that was linked to toxic exposure from those deployments. He died Feb. 13, 2021, at age 51.

“We've got to get this done for him and the rest of the heroes, all the heroes who worked so very hard, and really wanted to go the full 20 years, but through no fault of their own, because they were injured in combat, they were not able to continue the careers,” Bilirakis said. 14851

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

From the Office of Brad Friez

National Service Officer

When it comes to filing claims we want to make sure that there is a diagnosis and treatment for a chronic condition unless you are a Gulf War Veteran who has symptoms that VA recognizes as an undiagnosed condition. Recently we had a Veteran who was told by someone in their guard unit to put a certain condition down on their claim form and apparently at the time had no diagnosis nor treatment for that condition. We always want to be creditable when filing claims or for any other VA benefit. My concern is either a Veteran or our organization or both can lose our standing with the VA when claims are not creditable.

Also, if we represent you before the VA and you receive correspondence from the VA that gives you a deadline for some response we need to know that as soon as possible. VA lists our organization as receiving a courtesy copy on written correspondence. That is not quite the entire situation. We do receive a copy of that correspondence but most every time in order to find that copy we have to pull up your electronic file in VA's software called VBMS. We are generally not aware of written correspondence Veterans receive without them informing us.

We do hear negative comments when it comes to medical treatment at the VA. But the vast majority of the time VA providers do an excellent job in providing treatment of their Veteran patients. If this is your situation I would encourage you to inform the VA of that great care you are receiving. One way to inform the VA of that great care is by passing those comments along to one of the Patient Advocates.

For Veterans who had a toxic exposure please go to www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures My understanding is this will begin the process for a questionnaire and a possible exam. Our local VA contacts in Sioux Falls are Bill and Steve at either 605-336-3230 ext # 6356 or 6733.

We also want to welcome Sara Ackert as the new Director of the VA Health Care System in Sioux Falls and look forward to working with her.

South Dakota Veterans Cemetery

Hits Milestone



On September 9, 2019, veterans, community leaders, and elected officials gathered in Sioux Falls for the groundbreaking for South Dakota's first state veterans cemetery. Turn forward the pages to 2023, and note that the team at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery has conducted their 500th burial.

We encourage you to walk around our beautiful cemetery and learn more about the veterans we have the honor to take care of. All of them are heroes. They all have a story worth telling. And its on us to honor their lives, to provide them a lasting resting place befitting their service, and to offer their families and loved ones our eternal support.

Sharing veterans stories....honoring their selfless service and sacrifice....remembering that we would not be here appreciating the freedoms we enjoy—if not for heroes like the ones buried at our state veterans cemetery.

CFC Campaign

If you are a federal government employee or your employer offers a charitable giving campaign through United Way, you can help us to continue our programs and services we offer to our members, veterans and other individual with disabilities.

CONTRIBUTION CODE: 54682



PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Veterans can now Access their Disability Benefit Decision Online

Veterans can now access their disability benefit claim decision notice letters electronically on VA.gov, empowering them to quickly and easily see their disability decisions. Before this option was available, veterans had to wait for a paper copy of their decision notice to be mailed to them.

While previous iterations of VA.gov allowed veterans to access benefits summary letters, they could not access the full copy of these decision notification letters from their electronic claims folders. This service became available to veterans on VA.gov on Jan. 17th.

Since launching, nearly 280,000 decision notice letters have been downloaded. The new electronic option is also expected to reduce calls to the National Call Centers, freeing up call center respondents to answer other questions and requests from veterans and their families.

Types of claims and appeals that can be tracked with this tool are:

- Disability compensation (including claims based on special needs like an automobile or clothing allowance)
- Veterans or survivors pension benefits
- Special monthly compensation (such as Aid and Attendance)
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- Burial allowance to help pay for a veteran's burial and funeral expenses.

Veterans can also use this tool to check the status of a claim or appeal for other benefits like:

- VA health care
- GI Bill or other education benefits
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
- A home loan Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
- A Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) or Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grant
- Life insurance
- A pre-need determination of eligibility to be buried in a VA national cemetery.

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To use this tool, you'll need to have one of these free accounts:

- A verified Login.gov account, or
- A verified ID.me account, or
- A premium DS Logon account (used for eBenefits and milConnect), or
- A premium My HealtheVet account.

To access their decision letters, veterans can log in to VA.gov and check the status of their claim. For more details, visit [Check Your VA Claim Or Appeal Status | Veterans Affairs](#).

Helpline Center Offers New Survivor of Suicide Loss Website

The Helpline Center has offered support to those bereaved by suicide loss since 1999 and now, thanks to funds raised through The 437 Project, they are able to expand how they can meet individuals in their grief.

We're happy to announce that they have also launched a new website designed with the goal of providing hope and help to even more suicide loss survivors. There are many new features on the site and we encourage you to take a look and help us spread the word!

[Healing After a Suicide Loss](#) booklet, [In Remembrance](#) page, [Resource Library](#)

In addition to the website and resources, they will begin offering a virtual support group online on the third Wednesday of each month via Zoom. They truly want to support individuals across South Dakota and are hopeful these new opportunities will provide just that. To learn more about their survivor resources or their virtual support group, please email griefsupport@helplinecenter.org.

Arbor Day - Friday, April 28th



**PLANT
A TREE!**

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

PVA National Scholarship Program



We want to invest in you and your higher education!

Paralyzed Veterans of America is proud to offer funds to PVA members and their immediate family members through our Educational Scholarship Program.

We will award scholarships in the amount of **\$2,500 to full-time students** and **\$1,000 to part-time students**.

Eligibility

Qualified members are:

- A PVA member, the spouse of a member, or an unmarried child (under 24 years of age) who is dependent (as defined by the IRS) on the member for principal support.
- A citizen of the United States.
- Accepted and enrolled as a full-time or part-time student in an accredited U.S. college or university.

Please Note: Previous award recipients may apply, but are limited to a total of two scholarships in a lifetime.

Questions? Contact christih@pva.org

Submission Process

Click on the link to apply online [PVA 2023 Scholarship Application \(tfaforms.net\)](https://tfaforms.net)

Deadline to apply: May 15, 2023

Now Accepting 2023-24 Scholarship Applications

Awarding Timeline

March 1- May 15 at 11:59 p.m.: Scholarship application is open.

May 15-June 5: Reviewing period.

June 6-16: Award winners will be notified. All applicants who were not awarded a scholarship will be contacted by the end of June.

PVA North Central Chapter

“Darrell Jepsen Memorial Scholarship” Program



The PVA North Central Chapter has established a scholarship program to provide financial assistance for PVA members and their families so that they may achieve their goals in the academic arena. Scholarships will vary according to the number and merit of applications received and the total funds available. At no time will a grant exceed \$1,000 per academic year.

Applications are now available for 2023-2024. Please contact the Chapter Office for an application or you can download it at www.ncpva.org.

Applications must be postmarked by **July 1st**,
no exceptions

(continued from Page 6 - Sports & Rec)

Upcoming Trapshoots

Wisconsin Trapshoot, Green Bay, WI

May 19-21, 2023

Vaughan Trapshoot, Elburn, IL

May 26-28, 2023

Iowa Trapshoot, Cedar Rapids, IA

June 16-18, 2023

2023 Armed Forces Day Program

Saturday, May 20th

Alliance Building, Sioux Falls, 10:00 AM



2023 Memorial Day Program

Monday, May 29th

SD State Veterans Cemetery, 10:00 AM

(Shuttle Busing will be provided from Alliance Building, Sioux Falls)

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**PVA North Central Chapter****Birthday Roster - April/May 2023**

Carl Oleson	Apr 03
Frederick Ellwein	Apr 06
Rodney Melcher	Apr 08
Christine Speirs	Apr 08
Cliff Koele	Apr 09
Thomas Olson	Apr 12
Victor Kienitz	Apr 13
Linn Garber	Apr 14
Terry Williams	Apr 16
Bruce Hoffman	Apr 20
Shaun Rupe	Apr 26
David Allen	Apr 29
Carl Stricherz	Apr 29
Barbara Priesz	Apr 30
David Van Horn	Apr 30
Jerry Cain	May 01
Ken Laughlin	May 01
Larry Johnson	May 03
John Huntington	May 04
Gary Nordean	May 07
Don Westberg	May 07
Travis Kasten	May 09
Bob Uecker	May 14
Roger Holtzmann	May 15
Dennis McNulty	May 17
Eric Vetter	May 19
John Kuhlman	May 20
Scott Petersen	May 21

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Merle Kjer	May 25
Steve Whitney	May 25
Perry Grimme	May 26
Gary Howey	May 27
Sarah Bierman	May 28
Robert Buchanan	May 30
Vernon Howie	May 30
Michael McGinnis	May 30
Robert DeJong	May 31

988 Suicide Crisis Line

On July 16, 2022, 988 became the national three-digit phone number for all mental health, substance use, and suicide crises. 988 will be routed to South Dakota's only National Suicide Prevention Lifeline center, **The Helpline Center**, transitioning from the current Lifeline number, 1-800-273-8255. 988 will offer rapid access to behavioral health support through connection with trained crisis specialists.

How will 988 differ from 211? 211 is a non-emergency number for finding community resources, such as food banks and shelters. 911 is currently used for all emergencies, including mental health emergencies. 988 will be a mental health crisis number, and calls will be handled by National Suicide Prevention Lifeline counselors.

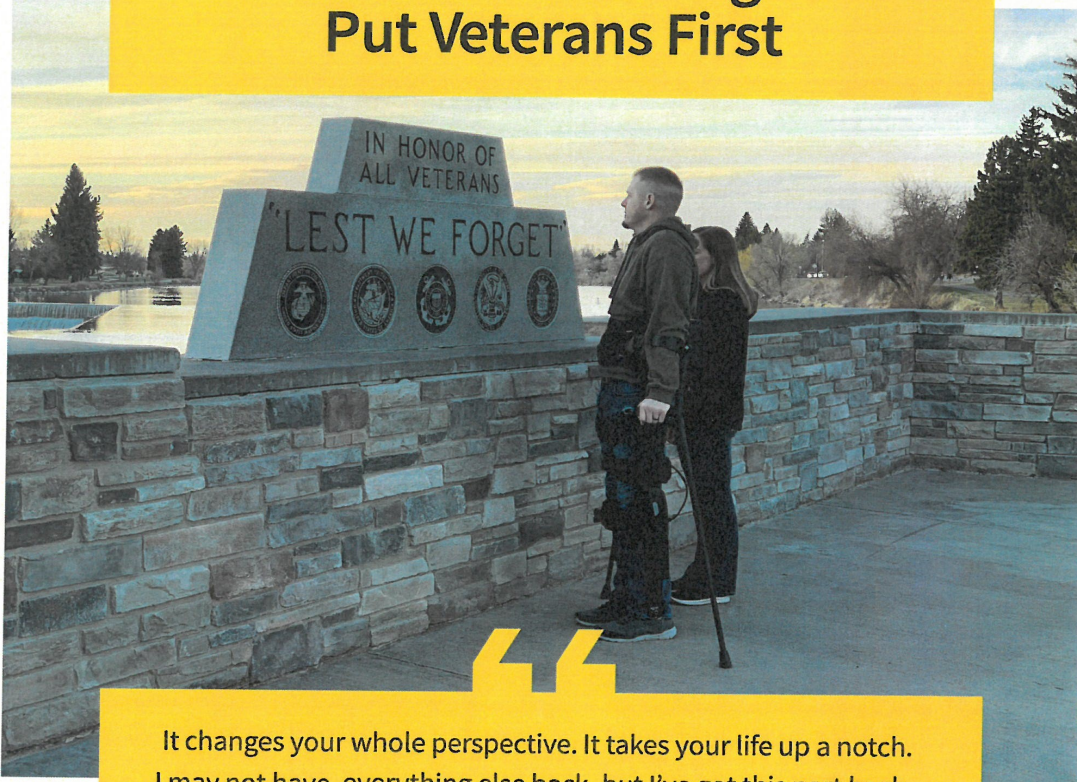
When should you call 988? Anyone in need of crisis support for themselves or someone else should call 988 which started on July 16th. 988 is an opportunity to transform our country's behavioral health crisis system to respond to anyone in need.

Is 1-800-273-8255 going away? No. Moving to 988 does not mean the 800 number goes away. Dialing either number will get people to the same services, no matter which number they use. In the end, 988 is an easier-to-remember way for all Americans to access a strengthened and expanded network of crisis call centers.

For more information about 988, click on: <https://sdsuicideprevention.org/988-2/>.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

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PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER



Are you a Veteran in crisis?
We're here for you.



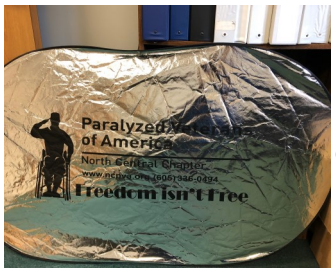
**Veterans
Crisis Line**
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

SUPPORT PVA
NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter relies solely on private donations and receives NO government funding! Your contribution is 100% tax deductible, as we are a 501(c) (3) corporation. Support by individual donors and businesses enable us to make our services FREE to members.

Please support our mission through a direct donation to:

PVA North Central Chapter
209 North Garfield Avenue,
Sioux Falls, SD 57104



Car Sunshades for Sale

Proceeds will benefit the Chapter's programs and services!

Contact the Chapter Ofc
(605) 336-0494

QUESTION:
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED INCLUDING PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST?

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Hot Springs, SD 57747
vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranshome

For Admissions information, please contact Lisa Woepffel at 605-745-5127 Ext 1500115

How to Donate Property

Please donate that Auto, Boat, Yacht, Truck or RV that's no longer needed to NCPVA! Receive the maximum legal tax deductions and possibly a partial cash payment.

For more information about car, boat, RV and other property donations or to receive a "no obligation" evaluation of your potential vehicle or other property donation, please call toll free: (866) 2-GIVING or (866) 244-8464.

We pick up anywhere in the U.S.A.



ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS

BE SURE TO LOOK FOR YOUR
VOLUNTEER NUMBER OR VAVS
VOLUNTEER NAME SOMEWHERE
IN THIS NEWSLETTER AND CON-
TACT THE CHAPTER OFFICE IF
YOUR NAME OR NUMBER IS
LISTED.

CHUCK DOOM
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

1519 W. 51st Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57105

(605) 332-6866 / Fax: (605) 338-5489

National Service Office: (605) 333-6896 NSO Email: www.dav.vbasux@va.gov

www.davsd.org www.dav.org

“DISABLED VETERANS HELPING DISABLED VETERANS”



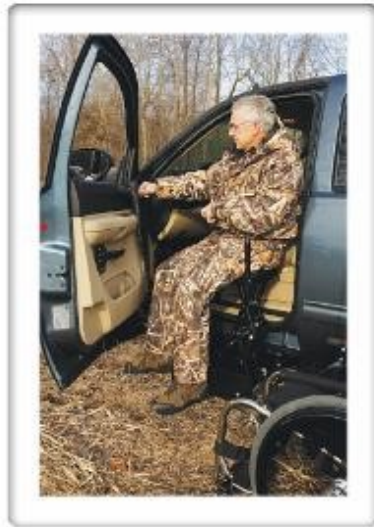
FULFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED



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—President Lyndon B. Johnson



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www.mobilityworks.com





Paralyzed Veterans of America
North Central Chapter
209 N. Garfield Ave
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

VA Health Care Systems Contact Information

Sioux Falls VA Health Care System

2501 West 22nd Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
Phone: (605) 336-3230 or (800) 316-8387
Fax: (605) 333-6878

VA Black Hills Health Care System - Fort Meade Campus

113 Comanche Road
Fort Meade, SD 57741
Phone: (605) 347-2511 or (800) 743-1070
Fax: (605) 720-7171

VA Black Hills Health Care System

500 North 5th Street
Hot Springs, SD 57747
Phone: 605-745-2000
Fax: 605-745-2091

Minneapolis VA Health Care System

One Veterans Drive
Minneapolis, MN 55417
Phone: (612) 725-2000 or 866-414-5058
Fax: (612) 725-2049

Fargo VA Health Care System

2101 Elm Street
Fargo, ND 58102
Phone: (701)232-3241
Fax: (701)239-3705

VA Montana Health Care System

1892 Williams Street
Fort Harrison, MT 59636
Phone: (406) 442-6410
Fax: (406) 447-7916

Cheyenne VA Health Care System

2360 E. Pershing Blvd.
Cheyenne, WY 82001
Phone: (307)778-7550
Fax: (307) 778-7336

Sheridan VA Health Care System

1898 Fort Road
Sheridan, WY 82801
Phone: (307) 672-3473 or (866) 822-6714
Fax: (307) 672-1900

The PVA North Central Chapter proudly serves the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Southwest Minnesota, and portions of Montana and Wyoming.