



Washington Update

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

HOUSE COMMITTEE STUDIES THE EFFICACY OF VA COMMUNITY CARE

On July 15, the House Veterans' Affairs Health Subcommittee held a hearing to examine how VA's Community Care Network (CCN) can be leveraged to help veterans receive the right care, at the right place, and at the right time. PVA submitted its views on the efficacy and practicality of community care for our members in a statement for the record. We reminded committee members of our firm belief that VA is the best health care provider for disabled veterans. Also, our members consistently choose VA's spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) system of care, because it provides a coordinated life-long continuum of services that has increased their lifespan by decades. We noted that VA's specialized systems of care follow higher clinical standards than those required in the private sector which is why preserving and strengthening VA's specialized systems of care, like SCI/D care, remains the highest priority for PVA.

In our statement, we identified several reasons why VA's CCN care is not suitable for our members. These included civilian providers lacking knowledge about treating SCI/D and how these injuries and illnesses impact other bodily parts and systems, the inaccessibility of civilian facilities, and the lack of proper diagnostic equipment. We concluded by urging the

subcommittee to take the necessary steps to ensure that VA's direct care system is not weakened to the point where care in the community becomes the only choice for catastrophically disabled veterans. You can view a recording of the hearing and find other relevant documents [here](#).

NDAA BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE

The House and Senate Armed Services Committees have completed their respective versions of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). While this annual defense policy bill focuses primarily on personnel, weapons systems, and administrative matters pertaining to the Department of Defense, in recent years, several veterans-related provisions have been inserted into the bill.

On July 9, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted 26-1 to advance its version of the Fiscal Year 2026 NDAA to the Senate floor. On July 15, the House Armed Services Committee also passed a bipartisan bill, 55-2. We are currently reviewing available text and evaluating the potential effect of any veterans' related provisions on PVA members. The bills may come to their respective floors prior to the August recess where they will be subjected to numerous amendments.



Once both chambers pass their respective versions of the bill, a joint House-Senate conference will be held to hammer out differences between the two bills in order to compile a single measure both chambers can agree on. Much of that work will likely be conducted by the staff over the August recess and the earliest lawmakers can be expected to vote on the final bill would be in the fall.

GAO REPORT ON VETERANS CRISIS LINE

In June, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) submitted a report on the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL). The report calls for a more comprehensive risk assessment for veterans that call the line for mental health support.

As of March 2025, the VCL employed more than 1,000 crisis responders who are responsible for answering the calls on VCL's main line. Of those employees, some are responsible for veterans with complex needs and for high frequency callers, while others handle text-based and chat interventions for veterans who are struggling.

Between 2021 and 2024, the VCL saw around 3.8 million customer interactions between calls, texts, and chat-based communications. VCL staff noted in a survey provided for the report that 47 percent of staff handling chat-based assistance, and 35 percent of text-based assistance, would frequently or always handle two veteran interactions at the same time. Attempting to support two veterans in crisis at the same time is not consistent with VCL procedures and training, and it could cause direct harm to the veterans seeking help.

GAO recommended that VA and the VCL improve procedures and routing policies for veterans using the chat and text features, adjust their internal procedures and staffing to meet the need, and establish appropriate procedures for disclosing incidents. VA agreed to the recommendations and will work to implement improvements. You can read the full GAO report [here](#).

If you or someone you know is struggling with a mental health crisis, call the 988 line and press 1 to be connected to the Veterans Crisis Line.

NEWS OF NOTE

OIG Publishes Report Regarding Amtrak's Customer Service Quality for Passengers with Disabilities

On June 11, Amtrak's Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a [report](#) regarding the quality of the company's customer service for passengers with disabilities. The report found that Amtrak had made improvements but still lacked an overarching strategy in its efforts to improve customer service for these passengers. Further, the company doesn't have a good understanding of the quality of service provided because it doesn't regularly analyze data that could provide that information. PVA met with Amtrak's OIG during its audit of the company's customer service to share our views on behalf of our members and other wheelchair users.

DOE Extends Effective Date of Direct Final Rules Due to Significant Adverse Comments

On June 14, the Department of Energy (DOE) announced that due to the receipt of significant adverse comments, it is extending the effective date of the direct final rule [Rescinding Regulations Related to Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs or Activities \(General Provisions\)](#) and the direct final rule [Rescinding New Construction Requirements Related to Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs or Activities](#). The effective dates of the direct final rules have been delayed until September 12. DOE is delaying the effective dates to consider comments. PVA submitted comments expressing our concerns about the effect the proposed rules would have on people with disabilities and urged DOE to withdraw them. PVA will continue to monitor this issue.

VA Announces Expanded Burial Benefits

The VA recently announced it is implementing temporary expansions to burial benefits thanks to the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act. Previously, a veteran who died at home and was receiving VA hospice care, was not guaranteed eligibility for VA burial benefits. Now, a veteran who passes away between July



1, 2025, and October 1, 2026, will be eligible for VA burial benefits. The press release is available [here](#).

ADVOCACY & COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Upcoming Webinar: Advocating During the August Congressional Recess

In June, we held our 2025 Advocacy Legislation Seminar and had great results. You may be wondering what is next on the horizon. Congress will be on recess in August, but advocacy doesn't take a break. Join us on July 30 at 2:00 p.m. ET to learn how you can make your voice heard while lawmakers are back in their home states and districts. We'll cover strategies for attending town halls, using [PVAAction Force](#), and ways you can help mobilize your community for impact. You can register for the webinar [here](#).

REMINDER: PVA Member Advocacy Toolkit Now Available

PVA recently released an advocacy toolkit designed to empower individuals, regardless of experience level, with resources and guidance to effectively advocate. By sharing personal stories and engaging in meaningful conversations, PVA member advocates can drive meaningful change, locally and nationally, while shaping a better future. To view the toolkit, click [here](#).

Veterans' Committee Activities

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